

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*or* AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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April 2011

Vol. 116, No. 4



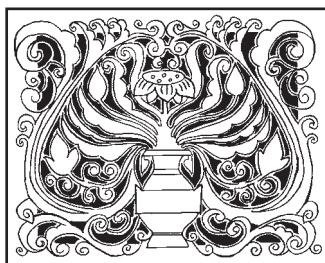


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**Vol. 116, No. 4**  
**April 2011**



Amrita Kalasha

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by Asim Chaudhuri

The profile of Vivekananda as “A Leader” had previously never been studied and thought about on its own, especially in the light of modern management and leadership theories. The author shows that Vivekananda preached and practised the sublime concept of servant-leadership in his life and within his organization eighty years before it was introduced to the corporate world and was accepted as the most singular and powerful statement of leadership concept in modern times.

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# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*



## *The Controlling Deities*

April 2011  
Vol. 116, No. 4

द्यावा चिदस्मै पृथिवी नमेते शुष्माच्चिदस्य पर्वता भयन्ते ।  
यः सोमपा निचितो वज्रबाहुयो वज्रहस्तः स जनास इन्द्रः ॥

Even heaven and earth bow down before him, even the mountains fear his power; O men, he is Indra, the thunder-armed, the drinker of soma juice extracted (from the soma plant), the one who wields the thunderbolt in his hands.

(Rig Veda, 2.12.13)

अग्निर्होता कविक्रतुः सत्यश्चित्रश्रवस्तमः ।  
देवो देवेभिरा गमत् ॥

May Agni, the invoker of all-knowing wisdom, the true, of excellent wonderful glory, the illuminator, come (to our sacrifice) with the gods.

(Rig Veda, 1.1.5)

सत्यं बृहदृतमुग्रं दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ।  
सा नो भूतस्य भव्यस्य पत्न्युरुं लोकं पृथिवी नः कृणोतु ॥

The great Truth, the terrible eternal Law, the consecrating rite, penance, prayer, and sacrifice (all these) uphold the Earth. May the Earth, the protector of our past and future, make this vast world for us.

(Atharva Veda, 12.1.2)

यत्प्रज्ञानमुत चेतो धृतिश्च यज्ज्योतिरन्तरमृतं प्रजासु ।  
यस्मान्न ऋते किञ्चन कर्म क्रियते तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ॥

May that mind of mine, which is the instrument of gaining special and general knowledge, which is steadiness itself, which is the immortal light in living beings, and without which no work is done, be of auspicious resolution.

(Yajur Veda, 34.1.6.3)

# THIS MONTH

Worldwide upheavals of various kinds reveal a restless pattern for unification rather than discord. **Concord Through Bhakti** shows how humanity's expanding awareness of the world is leading us to Sri Ramakrishna, the avatara of the age.



Holy Mother's unobtrusive life manifested the highest Truth. Ben Todd Baker, an undergraduate from Brown University, Providence, studies four characteristics that are equally inherent in **Sarada Devi and the Truth**.

Shinto is the ancient religion of Japan. Dr Dipak Sengupta, former Chief General Manager, Coal India Limited, describes the people, rituals, shrines, and beliefs that he encountered while touring Japan in **The Kami Way: Shinto Religion of Japan**.

**The Making of Vivekananda: His Family's Role** is an account of the influence Swami Vivekananda's family—grandparents and parents—had in transforming the child Narendranath into a world figure. Dr Sukanya Ray is assistant professor of political science, Lady Brabourne College, Kolkata.

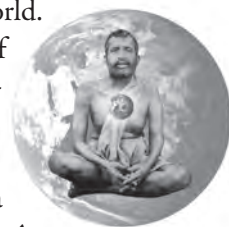


Dr Suruchi Pande, a prolific writer, poet, musician, scholar, researcher, conservationist, and social worker, gives copious references both ancient and modern to India's national bird in **Indian Peafowl in Sanskrit Literature and Tradition**.

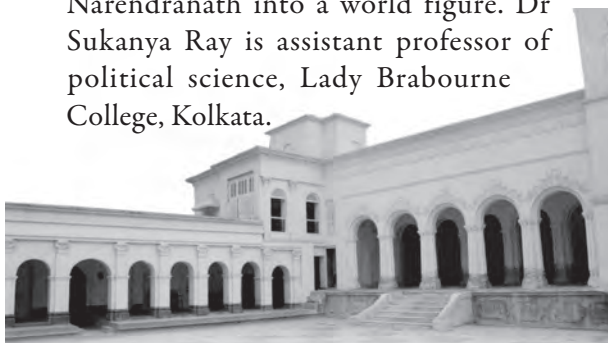
Based on his extensive travels, studies, and original insight, Swami Vivekananda had enunciated an all-round human development decades before the creation of the United Nations Development Programme. Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, former Professor of Statistics, Calcutta University, has logically quantified Swamiji's principles in **Human Development: Translating Vivekananda's Ideas into Numbers**.

Sri Ramakrishna's love has an immense social implication for India and the world.

This dimension of the avatara of the present era is insightfully explored by Swami Bhajanananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, in **Sri Ramakrishna: A 'New Man' of the Age – II**.



Work performed properly should reinforce meditation, and vice versa, in order to develop a strong spiritual mind. Swami Ranganathananda, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Order, reaffirms in this concluding section the importance of the **Spiritual Training of the Mind**.





# Concord Through Bhakti

THE WORLD IS, metaphorically speaking, shrinking each passing day due to improving communications of various kinds. Apart from the accessibility to know the world's marvels, connectivity is making humanity close-knit. This phenomenon is occurring through the storage, retrieval, and transmission of information. Whatever happens at one end of the globe finds its reverberations and repercussions all over. Communications have made humanity more aware by extending consciousness and gradually making humans truly global. '*Yatra vishvam bhavati-eka-nidam*'; in which the universe finds a single place of rest.'

While frontiers and horizons of knowledge are opening up, this world remains, as Swami Vivekananda says, 'wheel within wheel, this intricate mass of machinery, most complex, most wonderful.' Diversity and variety are finally recognized as the world's essential nature, or rather, we are forced to do so. There was a time when it was thought that science had all the answers. It is found now that each discipline has, after a few steps, branched out into allied or sometimes completely disparate fields. The more people work in a particular area, the more it extends into newer areas. Others coming later pursue it further to find it again branching off. This has created a knowledge explosion. It is like entering into the bowels of this 'intricate mass of machinery', finding labyrinths inside labyrinths lying undiscovered. Secret after secret is unveiled, yet the pursuit for comprehensive answers continues while the solutions remain remote. Knowledge is uncov-

ering worlds within inexhaustible worlds. True scientists are not complacent but humbled by this nature of knowledge. Swamiji says, 'unity in variety is the plan of creation.'

The unravelling of secrets is making humanity more cerebral, and the benefits flow down to everyone in this shrinking world, for it is the nature of the mind to spread and synthesize knowledge. In the old days Swamiji said that, 'whenever either by mighty conquest or by commercial supremacy different parts of the world have been kneaded into one whole race and bequests have been made from one corner to the other, each nation, as it were, poured forth its own quota, either political, social, or spiritual.' The world is today well connected and ideas and services are surging through communication channels. The need to link things, as in the past, through force and fraud is redundant. Each isolated culture will grow left to itself, but this growth can be quickened through interaction and cooperation. People working in a particular field are often surprised when solutions come from others working in a completely different field.

The idea that knowledge is something rarefied and meant for a select few is completely wrong. Each person that works contributes to knowledge. It is an ancient truth spoken in the Bhagavadgita: '*Sarvam karmakhilam partha jnane parisamapyate*'; all karma in their totality, O Partha, culminates in knowledge.' Every working person is pushing forwards the frontiers of knowledge. Of course, work ought to be done with concentration. Swamiji says: 'The more


this power of concentration, the more knowledge is acquired, because this is the one and only method of acquiring knowledge.' Hence, Swamiji has all through laid much emphasis on work as a sure means for prosperity and freedom.

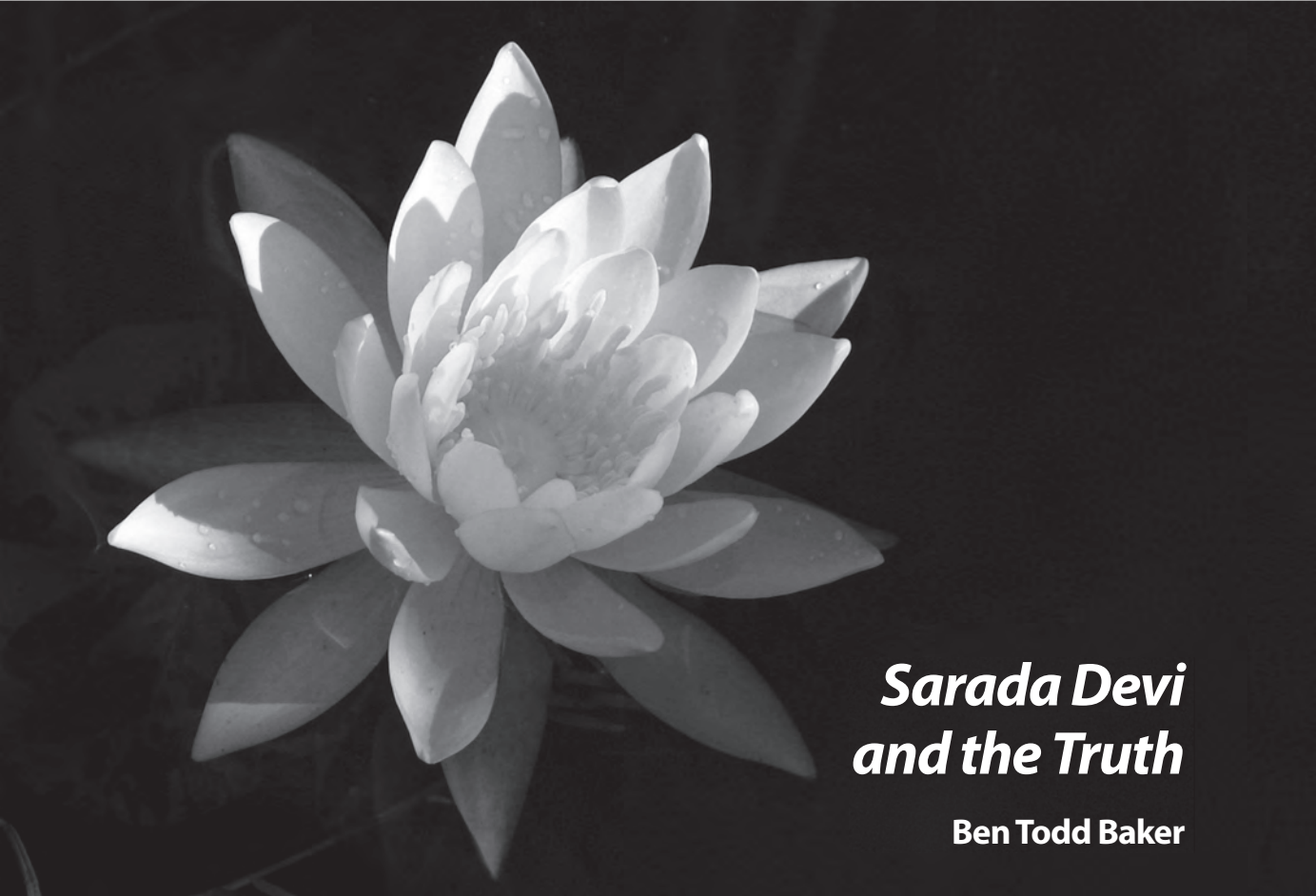
The world is saner, less violent, and more co-operative today than ever before. This contention can be challenged with what one finds everyday in personal brutality and cruelty, in selfishness, greed, and corruption. However, these things were present even before but not known widely, because the world was partitioned by numerous limitations as well as distance. Today faster modes of travel and availability of internet have spread and magnified every small thing. Knowledge not only transforms lifestyles and thought-styles and brings innovation, it also is responsible for eradicating corruption, violence, and other social evils through transparency in our dealings. The Gita declares: '*Na hi jnanena sadrisham pavitram-iha vidyate*'; indeed, there is nothing purifying here comparable to knowledge.' The Gita further elaborates that knowledge liberates.

There is nothing that brings more joy and fulfilment than knowledge. 'The gift of knowledge is a far higher gift than that of food and clothes; it is even higher than giving life to a man, because the real life of man consists of knowledge. Ignorance is death, knowledge is life. Life is of very little value, if it is a life in the dark, groping through ignorance and misery.' Knowledge also implies renunciation; and the greater the sacrifices, the higher the knowledge. Such a power is the best that a person can strive for, and that is the reason why it was held sacrosanct and given prestige. The culture not based on knowledge is just a thin veneer of artificiality.

Swamiji, in one of his letters to Swami Ramakrishnananda, writes: 'In this Incarnation atheistic ideas ... will be destroyed by the sword

of Jnana (knowledge), and the whole world will be unified by means of Bhakti (devotion) and Prema (Divine Love).' Combining this with what Swamiji said in his lecture at Madura will give a clearer picture of Sri Ramakrishna: 'India's contribution to the sum total of human knowledge has been spirituality, philosophy. These she contributed even long before the rising of the Persian Empire; the second time was during the Persian Empire; for the third time during the ascendancy of the Greeks; and now for the fourth time during the ascendancy of the English, she is going to fulfil the same destiny once more.'

India was awakened from its slumber with the inundation of European ideas, and before she could lose her soul Sri Ramakrishna, the avatara of the age, experienced all the previous spiritual knowledge of the land, synthesized all fragments within himself, and poured out the compound to the world. This was necessary both for India's and the world's well-being. He demonstrated that the zenith of knowledge is the experience of God and that this is the goal of human life. God can be reached by any path, provided it is sincerely followed. And this goal was open to everyone. Sri Ramakrishna's advent opened up the world from its parochialism and narrowness to universality. For whatever is parochial and narrow is the opposite of knowledge, and will wither and die. Sri Ramakrishna not only showed that the highest jnana and bhakti are one, but he indeed embodied them. This is the unifying power of Sri Ramakrishna encircling the globe, cutting agnosticism and atheism. Swamiji also writes in the same letter: 'From the date that the Ramakrishna Incarnation was born, has sprung the Satya-Yuga (Golden Age).' Sri Ramakrishna is that tranquil 'place of rest' or 'nest' for humanity, unified through bhakti and *prema*. 



## ***Sarada Devi and the Truth***

**Ben Todd Baker**

**T**HE TOPIC OF THIS PAPER, as indicated by the title, is the Truth as it relates to Holy Mother. When I say 'the Truth' I will not be referring merely to the opposite of falsehood, nor am I considering logical truth, scientific truth, or anecdotal truth. 'Truth' in this case is the ultimate spiritual understanding that reality is a single entity, that all of existence is *one*. Falsehood, in opposition to *this* Truth, is the division erected by our senses, the partitioning of existence into I and the other. It is said that Sarada Devi embodies this Truth, and in this paper I will be investigating this idea. I will take a noticeably methodical and analytical approach that I have developed, for better or worse, as a student of philosophy. The thought behind this piece of writing is that a close examination of Holy Mother as she relates to the Truth will, hopefully, uncover the ways in which she embodies it and perhaps provide a bet-

ter understanding of the entities being discussed. Sarada Devi is known to have exemplified certain characteristics throughout her life, and I will be discussing four of them: (i) her modesty, (ii) her simplicity, (iii) her love for all, and (vi) her accepting nature. Some of these traits are subtly related to each other and to other ideas, and that will come up during the course of the discussion. But it seems to me that, to a large extent, these features define who we take Sarada Devi to be. I hope to demonstrate that each of these features gives us cause to endorse the thought that Sarada Devi embodies the Truth, since they are also features of the Truth itself.

### ***Self-effacing Modesty***

The first aspect I will examine is modesty, but I should start by clearly describing the trait I am concerned with. Sarada Devi exhibited supreme



humility at all stages of her life, which is of course a major part of her modesty. She is also especially known for being actually hidden from sight despite her physical and spiritual proximity to Sri Ramakrishna, an illustrious and conspicuous figure. This concealment is also an essential part of her modesty and so must also be analysed when considering her relation to the Truth.

As a child Sarada Devi demanded very little attention. She would not run and play and quarrel with other children, but mostly helped around the house and occasionally played with her dolls, always relatively quiet and calm. It is said that at seven, despite her shy nature, she bowed to touch the feet of her husband Sri Ramakrishna, a man eighteen years her senior who she knew very little of. Throughout her life by Sri Ramakrishna's side, and after his death, she remained humble, always striving to avoid appearing impressive to others and generally not attracting attention to herself. She remained hidden, though her husband was such a remarkable and striking personality whose spiritual guidance was sought by many people. In fact, some people who regularly visited Sri Ramakrishna could not even say what Sarada Devi looked like because they had not encountered her, at least not knowingly. Sarada Devi was basically modesty personified, and so I take that modesty to be one of her defining characteristics. Having established this point, we can now examine what this aspect of hers says about the relationship to the Truth she is accredited with having. We can ask, 'Does Holy Mother's great modesty corroborate her being an embodiment of the Truth?'

For many who understand it to be the Truth, oneness probably strikes them as a quite profound and impressive idea. It may seem contradictory to suggest such an ultimate and fundamental Truth, which changes our very idea of self and our assessment of Reality, could

be closely associated with being modest and inconspicuous. We might wonder how this incredible Truth could possibly be epitomized by an individual so self-effacing as Holy Mother. However, to take Sarada Devi's modesty to represent a departure from the nature of the Truth would be to conflate the descriptor unassuming with unimpressive. It would of course be very wrong to say that Sarada Devi's character was anything short of extraordinary, and my statements certainly have not implied that. It would be strange to attribute supreme modesty to someone who is unimpressive, as they would have nothing to be modest about. Holy Mother's greatness is not only compatible with her tendency to downplay that greatness, but it is actually amplified by that tendency. The Truth being discussed presently, though tremendous, similarly refrains from promoting itself—it does not go out on display and insist you acknowledge its validity. It would run contrary to the spirit of the Truth for it to be established by force. The concept of oneness stays hidden just behind our senses and ego, not because it is cryptic or obscure, but simply because that is its nature. Like Sarada Devi it is always close at hand, yet a very rare thing to fully come in contact with. An interesting final note for this section is that the Truth asks us to be self-effacing—using the common understanding of the term 'self'. The adjective 'self-effacing' is synonymous with modest, and the verb 'to efface', by itself, means to eliminate. So it is not only appropriate that the Truth be embodied by someone supremely self-effacing, but this feature directly lends itself to Sarada Devi's embodiment of the Truth. I have argued that modesty is a trait that is necessary in describing Holy Mother, and this trait is intimately tied to the elimination of self, a necessary part of fully realizing oneness, which is the Truth.

### Simple Oneness

I think it would be fitting to move next to simplicity, since the argument will be in a similar vein. In her youth, Sarada Devi lived the life of an ordinary Indian village girl. Her family's wealth and status were unremarkable, as were the activities she engaged in. She fulfilled her responsibilities around the house and looked after her younger brothers without incident, and received no formal education. She was married as a young girl, which was also commonplace at the time. In short, she lived her early years in a very regular and simple fashion. Once she moved to Dakshineswar to live with Sri Ramakrishna, she entered into a unique position. There were no longer others who lived a life nearly identical to hers, but despite this fact her life remained patently simple. Her living quarters were very small, she left the temple very rarely, and her days consisted mostly in cooking, caretaking, worship, and meditation—not so unlike her childhood. Even on her pilgrimage, her travels were limited to spiritual sites in India. There were no lofty ambitions for Holy Mother, no faraway lands with new and varied experiences. At the risk of paradox you might say that her life was amazingly simple. This is why I reckon simplicity as another essential feature of Sri Sarada Devi, one which you must cite in order to completely describe her. Now, again, I ask how this feature relates to the Truth she is said to embody.

I expect you will quickly grant me that the idea of oneness is not a complicated one. There are not many elements involved, and the concept is not difficult to understand. However, to really attain or experience this Truth is no trivial task; the idea itself—‘existence is singular’—seems fairly straightforward. But the aim I presented at the start of the discussion was to show Sarada Devi's fundamental attributes to mirror those of the Truth, so it is not enough merely to confirm

that the Truth is not complex, I must establish that simplicity, like for Sarada Devi, is a defining characteristic of oneness.

The central thesis of oneness involves the denial of the distinction between self and the other. This principle is called non-dualism. Theories of Reality that depart from this truth hold that Reality is separable into multiple discrete entities—perhaps individual people, or organisms, or subatomic particles. These theories are dualistic. I should note here that there is one possible theory, other than oneness, which is not dualistic, that is, it does not posit divisions in Reality. This would be a theory that holds existence to be null, a theory of non-reality whose thesis would be ‘nothing exists’. As far as I know such a theory has never been seriously defended, so I will not bother constructing a refutation of it here; and anyway, it could be found in the works of several famous philosophers—René Descartes probably foremost among them. Any dualistic representation of existence is, in virtue of that dualism, necessarily more complicated, less simple, than what is meant by the Truth in this paper. Whenever one account of Reality posits a single and complete item, if another account splits that item into two or more stand-alone entities, this latter account must—other things being equal—be the more complex theory. This does not follow from statements made earlier, it is a new premise I am introducing: ‘one is simpler than two’; and it strikes me as a reasonable one. If we accept this argument as well as the one to dismiss any theory of non-reality, then non-dualism is the simplest theory we are left with, in fact the simplest theory possible. The Truth that Sarada Devi is said to embody portrays existence as single and undivided. Contending theories divide Reality and *ipso facto* are more complicated. Therefore, it is in the fundamental nature of the Truth that it is the simplest vision of Reality, which surely implies

that simplicity counts among its crucial qualities. We see now that simplicity is an essential character of both Holy Mother and the Truth, which strongly supports the thought that Holy Mother embodies the Truth.

### ***Regarding All as a Part of Oneself***

Next I will move to Sarada Devi's love for all, another thing she was especially known for, and how it reflects the Truth. As mentioned earlier, she played the role of caretaker from a very early point in her life and took it upon herself to aid others in whatever way she could. She is also particularly known for never finding fault in others. There are multiple stories in which someone wrongs Sarada Devi through words or actions, and Holy Mother always immediately forgives the offender. Her penchant for forgiveness is one marker of her all-loving character. When it was rumoured that her husband was insane, Sarada Devi went to look on Sri Ramakrishna herself and saw only his spiritual brilliance, and then ignored the misgivings of her contemporaries. Sarada Devi could not look upon someone and make any assumptions that would reflect badly on them; she always judged in the most positive light possible, another expression of her love for all. Holy Mother saw all as if they were of her own body and was known to treat them thus. After all, when we consider the conception of 'her own body' she would come to through her spiritual understanding, it is unsurprising that she would take this view. Moving past her ego and bodily conception of self, Sarada Devi exhibited an indiscriminating care for all. For this reason too she was not harmed by the knowledge that she would not bear Sri Ramakrishna's children. And why would she be? Having recognized everyone to be her child, she did not need to have any more with her husband. All these examples arise out of Holy Mother's love for all,

which is born of her spiritual wisdom, and must be mentioned in a sensible discussion of her defining characteristics. We must examine how this aspect of Sarada Devi fits with the Truth.

An idea is not a being and is not capable of interpersonal relationships like love. It would therefore be strange to say that the Truth is all-loving. However, we can make sense of the thought that the Truth is selfless, both literally and in what it asks of us. In realizing the Truth we must transcend the ego and the self. To go a step further, there seems to be a relationship between selflessness and all-lovingness. Part of loving someone is considering that person to be a part of you, and to value his or her well-being as you do your own, if not more so. Love for all then involves regarding all as a part of you and never to put your own interests above anyone else's; and I suggested that Holy Mother did just this. This shows that being all-loving logically implies being selfless, for one regards all, and not a single body, as the self. This is exactly the perception propounded by oneness, and so we see how closely Sarada Devi's selfless love for all is tied to the Truth. Thus, Holy Mother's all-loving nature, which we established as an essential component of her person, is further evidence that she represents the ultimate Truth.

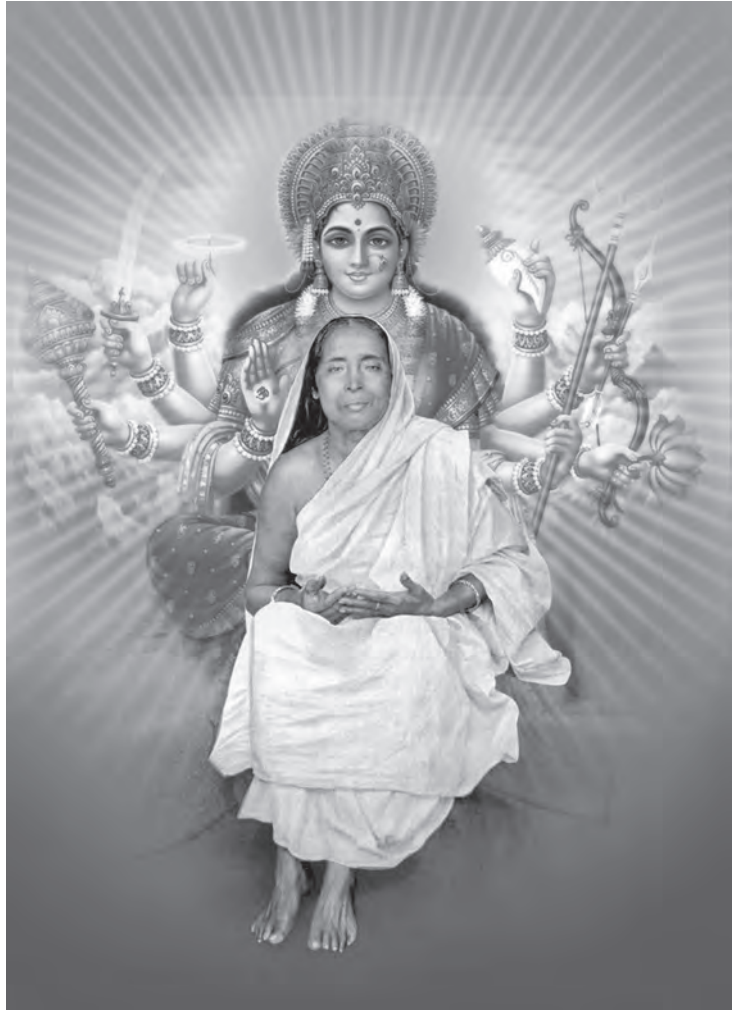
### ***Complete Acceptance***

The last of Holy Mother's features I will discuss is her non-attachment, which can largely be extrapolated from the characteristics already described. I think we will see that understanding her modesty, simplicity, and particularly her selfless love for all will help us frame and answer the right questions about non-attachment. Non-attachment in Sarada Devi is most clearly manifested as her ability to be completely accepting. She did not try to hold on to physical circumstances that were changing, or pursue circumstances she did not have. Instead she would take whatever came and



fulfil her duties without complaint. As mentioned earlier, when she endured wrongs, she was very quick to forgive; when she endured losses, she did not dwell on them. After Sri Ramakrishna's passing she is said to have worn a sari with a thin red border, rather than the white sari with no border that is customary for Indian widows. She recognized that her husband's existence was not at an end and did not cling to the physical body that was not his true self. Because she recognized that existence is singular, Holy Mother saw no purpose in securing certain resources for one arbitrary body at the cost of others. This is where our understanding of all-lovingness is useful, for we know that to be all-loving is not to be all-wanting. The all-encompassing love of Sarada Devi does not involve attachment to the object of love, for what comes when that object passes is also loved, and even the change itself is loved. I earlier described the connection between selflessness and all-lovingness, and here the absence of self will again come into play. When one no longer ascribes the title 'self' to one's physical person, non-attachment becomes a logical necessity, because there does not exist any anchor to which worldly desires might become attached. This position of selflessness and acceptance, with no room for attachment, is central to our understanding of Sarada Devi, and we will quickly see that it is central to the Truth as well.

In this case it is quite clear that Sarada Devi's trait reflects the Truth. Can we imagine anyone embodying this Truth who believes the acquisition and keeping of money or status to be of great import? Of course not. Non-attachment



is an essential tenet of oneness. I see no foothold from which a counter-argument could even begin. Holy Mother's absolute acceptance again illustrates the relationship between her and the Truth, and so we see that all four characteristics I suggested as defining Sarada Devi are also defining the Truth. I have not shown that these qualities exhaust those that are basic either to Sarada Devi or to the Truth. That project is far beyond the scope of my discussion. What we have established is that these fundamental features—modesty, simplicity, all-lovingness, selflessness, and non-attachment—all support very strongly the thought that Sarada Devi directly embodies the true unity of existence.





# *The Kami Way: Shinto Religion of Japan*

Dr Dipak Sengupta

*Gate to a Shinto Shrine*

**S**HINTO IS the indigenous religion of Japan and it existed before the advent of Buddhism in the sixth century CE. The Shinto religion does not have a concept of God or gods. Prayers are addressed to noble and sacred spirits, which are called Kami. The term 'Kami' can refer to an all-encompassing universal spirit or the spirits of the natural elements—such as the wind, thunder, sun, mountains, rivers, trees, and so on—or to the spirits of one's ancestors. Thus, ancestral worship is a part of the religion. 'Kami' is a Japanese word but written with Chinese characters and reads like Shin—hence Shinto, which means the way of the Kami or the Kami Way. Spirits associated with natural objects do not stay in a fixed place, consequently the Shinto religion does not have any temples, only shrines. A shrine is a resting place associated with one or more spirits.

## **A Visit to Nara**

Since my knowledge of the Shinto religion is very limited and it is unlike any of the major religions, I thought that it would be a good idea to join a tourist group with an English speaking Japanese guide. I joined a group that had a few Europeans, but consisted mostly of Japanese from different parts of the country. Our guide Ms Fujita had a good command of English and was well conversant with Japanese customs and practices.

Our destination was Nara, about 100 km south of Kyoto. Nara was once the capital of Japan before it was shifted to Kyoto. Nara is also the home of the Kasuga Taisha Shrine, one of the most important Shinto shrines in Nara and one of the oldest Shinto shrines in Japan.

After some time the bus entered the highway network. Highways are similar in every coun-

try—boring, monotonous, and speedy. Fields, towns, factories flashed past. There was no external sound; I was able to hear just the droning sound of conversation. Eventually we reached Nara and the bus stopped near a Shinto shrine.

We walked along a wide road lined with tall and ancient pine trees. On both sides of the road were decorative stone lanterns. Some of the lanterns had been installed centuries before and the best of them had been shifted to the local museum. The Kasuga Taisha shrine is known to have three thousand lanterns—two thousand of stone, which line the path to the shrine, and one thousand of bronze, hanging from the eaves of the shrine. These lanterns are lit three days in a year. Previously, the lanterns were lit with oil and the light would filter through the designs on each side. The lanterns were donated over the years by people for specific purposes. Today it is very costly to donate a lantern, so people donate a piece of crepe paper with their name written on it to be pasted on the box through which the light will shine.

We stopped at a gateway made of wood, which is called a torii. The torii gate marks the entrance to the shrine. Normally, there are a pair of guardian dogs or lions, called *komainu*, who are on either side of the shrine's entrance. Sometimes there are ferocious looking semi-human beings or two austere dignitaries with swords and arrows guarding the gate. Incidentally, there is no door at the gates. There may be one or many gates on the entrance road. The gates are made either of cypress or cedar. By law nobody can build a torii other than in a Shinto shrine. At the end of the road there was a beautiful fountain and basin where a few wooden ladles were kept. Ms Fujita explained that there are four elements in Shinto worship: purification, *harae*, by washing one's hands and face with water; offering, *shincen*, of food, drink,

money, and so on; prayer, *norito*, to ask and submit one's wishes; and symbolic feast, *naorai*, like taking prasada in India. Prayers used to be informal and in old Japanese. Now they have been formalized and drafted by the Association of Shinto Shrines, and prayer books are now available in the stores.

Ms Fujita explained that Shinto is a prayer-oriented religion. Whenever one has to ask for something, one does not go to a Buddhist temple, even if one is a Buddhist; one goes to a Shinto shrine. One may pray for passing an exam, winning a lottery, or for a child. For everything there is a ritual and a Shinto priest to help out with it. At the gate of every Shinto shrine there is a statue of an animal on either side. These are generally foxes with a letter held between their teeth, as we saw here. Different types of Shinto shrines have different types of animals—such as dogs, foxes, lions—on either side of the gates. These are Kami's messengers, who carry devotees' prayers to the Kami. While Buddhism is serious and sombre, Shinto is very colourful with fun and frolic. 'So,' Ms Fujita added, 'for a funeral rite one goes to a Buddhist temple, but for marriage or childbirth a Shinto shrine is preferred.'

Torii-gate with lion-guardians





Every Shinto shrine has an ablution pavilion. In fact, this practice is prevalent in Buddhist temples too. It is generally a fountain and a trough of flowing water. Ladles are kept there. Devotees are supposed to rinse their mouth, clean their face, and wash their hands by pouring water on their fingertips. After performing the purification rites we climbed a few steps and crossed the doorway. The gate with two large doors, inlaid with mythical beasts and plants and flowers, was open. There was a courtyard beyond the gate. We crossed the area and stood before a long and wide coin receptacle.

Ms Fujita explained how to pray before a Shinto shrine: 'You bow twice with folded hands. Then raise your hand still folded up to your eyes. Close your eyes and ask for the favour. Clap your hands twice and bow twice. Then, throw some coins in the receptacle.' We all did as directed. The Europeans were amazed to see the casualness of approach. One of them exclaimed, 'Then what?' Ms Fujita replied, 'Nothing. The prayer is taken to the Kami and you go home.' There is much more than 'nothing' beyond the casual prayer, however. There is an iron mesh hanging on the other side of the coin box. Casual visitors

like us are not allowed there. Devotees who come for a special ritual for some particular goal will be allowed inside accompanied by one or more priests. Beyond that there is the sanctum with push doors. Nobody is allowed in the sanctum except the main priest; the devotee can only stand in the doorway. The priest comes out of the sanctum with a rod adorned with some white paper on the tip. The whole body of the devotee is purified by the touch of the paper. White paper is a symbol of sacredness and purity. Nobody knows what is inside the sanctum. People say that there is a large mirror inside. Shades of the Kami come out within the mirror and the priest can see the Kami. There are symbolic divine objects through which the Kami appear. These sacred objects are called *Shintai* in Japanese; they may be a tree branch, white paper, a stone, a mirror, a bell, and so on. This object is housed within the innermost chamber of the shrine sanctuary. Thus the chamber becomes inviolable.

We strolled across the wide courtyard listening intently to Ms Fujita. Suddenly she stopped at a corner in front of a very old tree. This cedar tree used to be the habitat of the Kami a long time ago. This reminded me of the Kadamba

tree in Madurai, which used to be the original worship site around which the temple was developed. Building a shrine is not merely about finding suitable land. One has to search for a site where a Kami lives or would like to live. These are generally natural surroundings—a special tree, a grove, a particular rock, a part of a mountain, or a specific seashore. Next to the tree was a body of water. The presence of water is a requirement in any Shinto shrine as purification is essential before entering it. On one side there was a considerably large

*Paper decoration in a Shinto shrine*



hall. This is used for congregation or as a waiting room during festivals.

The best surprise was yet to come. As we left the hall, Ms Fujita took us to a side wall where we saw a rack of barrels stacked in rows one on top of the other. Each barrel had a colourful and decorative label written in Japanese on its side. With a smile Ms Fujita asked us, 'Can you guess what these are for?' None of us had any idea. These are containers for sake, Japanese rice wine. Sake is considered a must for any Shinto worship. The priest as well as the devotee sips sake during the ceremony. In old times every Shinto shrine had a brewery attached to it. But now sake is available in markets, where it is specially brewed for this purpose. Ms Fujita also showed us the shrine's old brewery, which had been closed down.

Wherever we went in Japan there seemed to be an equal number of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, and the number was quite large considering the limited population of each place. Most of the shrines were large, old, and frequently visited. The Japanese are open to both religions. They may go to meditate or ask for world peace in a Buddhist temple and go to a Shinto shrine to pray for their family's well-being and offer prayers through the local priest. Both religions are so intertwined that sometimes it is difficult to determine which custom belongs to which religion. Every Buddhist temple I saw had a white paper lace and straw rope hanging at the entrance, and every Shinto shrine had a bell and a copper vessel with water as is the custom in a Buddhist temple. Even the Koyasan temple complex, which is Buddhist—and where we stayed—had a small Shinto Inari shrine at the end of the corridor with white paper cones and fresh fruits. An Inari is a small shrine usually built within a large house, a temple complex, or at the corner of a large tract of land. It always has white paper in some form, fresh fruits and flowers, and sometimes two bottles of sake.



*Lady Shinto priest*

Along with some famous Buddhist temples I also visited a number of Inari shrines, both large and small. The basic layout is the same everywhere. There are either one or more torii painted in red with a messenger fox or lion on either side of the entrance.

There is a coin box in the main temple before the iron mesh to hide the sanctum. Sometimes a bell hangs on a straw rope at the entrance. The visitor is supposed to pull the rope to ring the bell. There is generally a stack of sake barrels exactly the same size and shape that we saw in Nara. Priests walk past the visitors minding their own business. The senior priest wears all white. The junior priests wear a white kimono over a pair of green trousers and sometimes a yellow scarf on top. Previously women were not permitted to be priests, but after the Second World War women were also admitted to the priesthood due to a shortage of male priests. They wear a white kimono over a red skirt.

### ***Kamakura Shrine***

The most interesting event I saw was in a Shinto shrine in Kamakura. Kamakura became the capital of Japan after Kyoto and before Tokyo. The Tsurugaoka Hachimangu shrine is the most important in Kamakura. It has a long approach



*Lanterns on the way to the shrine*

stretching from the city's waterfront through the city and has many torii gateways. This shrine is one of the largest in Japan and reached by a long walkway decorated with lanterns on either side. The walkway passes under a very high torii gate. We had to ascend fifty or so steps to reach the shrine. Everything was similar to the other shrines, except that the scale was much bigger. There were many visitors: from people wearing ordinary clothes to ladies wearing sophisticated kimonos. Everybody was bowing in front of the coin box and throwing in some coins. A ceremony was taking place behind the iron mesh covering the area. There were lots of people waiting in the large hall. This seemed to be a very popular shrine.

Near the steps there was a podium for functions. As we approached the podium a marriage ceremony was in progress. The bride and the groom, dressed traditionally in a kimono and suit, were standing at the centre of the podium. Groups of people from the bride's and the groom's party were seated on chairs on both sides. The head priest in white dress was seated behind. Two priests, one male and the other female, were conducting the ceremony. Both the priests were chanting. A lady was

fanning the bride with a branch of green leaves. Some fruits and candles were on a small table before them. Just outside the ceremonial area three musicians were sitting at the edge of the podium and playing music. Below the steps of the podium there were three pairs of black and white wooden slippers with high heels for the priests.

The ceremony lasted for about an hour. After they left another marriage party came in and the ceremony started. A group with a small baby was waiting outside for a blessing ceremony for the baby. I learned that new babies are brought to a Shinto shrine to be recognised by the local Kami as a new member of the community.

The Japanese, like Indians, are flexible in their religions and rituals. Their loyalty shifts between Shinto and Buddhism seamlessly. Because of a stiff resistance in the medieval period Christianity could hardly penetrate the islands, and Islam failed too. In my trip I saw only one church in Kamakura, which appeared very insignificant in comparison to the flamboyant architecture of the Shinto shrine. I found that the Japanese are religious in a true sense. They are honest, soft-spoken, courteous, and disciplined. I enjoyed every moment of my stay there, thanks to the Kami. PB

*Bride and groom on their way to salute the priests*





# The Making of Vivekananda: His Family's Role

Dr Sukanya Ray

THE ORIENTATIONS RECEIVED from one's family at a young age leave an impact on the approach to life one develops during adulthood. In the light of such a proposition this article gives an account of the orientations Swami Vivekananda received from his family—maternal and paternal grandparents as well as parents—that helped him develop into the world figure he became—a living Vireshwara, 'lord of the heroes', and Artanatha, 'lord of the afflicted'.

## Narendranath's Grandparents

The one who would shake the world as Swami Vivekananda was born as Narendranath Datta on 12 January 1863—the auspicious Makara Sankranti, the last day of the Bengali month of Poush—in Simulia, north Calcutta. The Datta family originally hailed from the village Datta Dariatona, located in the Kalna subdivision of Burdwan district. Rammohan Datta, the great grandfather, built a grand house at Gourmohan Mukherjee lane in Simulia, where Narendranath was born. Rammohan was a 'Farsi lawyer'—a lawyer versed in Persian—assistant to an English attorney practising in the High Court at Calcutta. Rammohan's son Durgaprasad, the grandfather of Narendranath, was versed in Persian too and in Sanskrit as well. He also took to the law profession, being connected to an attorney's firm. 'But he had such a strong leaning towards monastic life that after the birth of a son in 1835 he renounced the world, becoming a monk at the age of twenty-five, and was not heard of by any member of the

family until the twelve years of spiritual practices prescribed by monastic rule had been completed.'<sup>1</sup> It was later heard that Durgaprasad had become the head of a monastery at Varanasi.

An interesting incident indicates Durgaprasad's strength of mind and quality of character in keeping his vows of sannyasa. Durgaprasad would come to Calcutta in his new identity on annual pilgrimages to the Sagar Island and would stay in the house of his *bhiksha-putra*,<sup>2</sup> which was near the ancestral house of the Dattas. During one such visit Durgaprasad was forcibly taken to his ancestral house by his relatives and locked in a room on the assumption that contact with his wife, son, and other relatives would make him change his mind and bring him back to worldly life. But despite all attempts Durgaprasad refused to take even a morsel of food during his confinement and groaned so much that he began to froth at the mouth. Apprehending his death the elders among his relatives set him free. Durgaprasad never set foot in this house again.

Indeed, so strong and unwavering was Durgaprasad's commitment to his life as a monk that during one of his pilgrimages to Varanasi he accidentally met his wife Shyamasundari as she slipped on the road leading to the temple of Vishwanath. She fell and lost consciousness and Durgaprasad, the passing monk, not knowing that it was actually his wife, lifted her up only to leave her alone the very instant he realized who she actually was. Worldly attachments were not for Durgaprasad and his wife accepted this fact

gracefully. There is validity in the observation that 'She, as well as he, had renounced'.<sup>3</sup>

Family traits and dispositions are passed down to the next generation:

In striving to account for the exceptional genius of Swami Vivekananda, one must not lose sight of the impressive figure of his grandfather, the man who deemed the world well lost in his search for God. Vivekananda's pronounced tendency towards the monastic life was 'in his blood'—as we say to explain those inexplicable outcroppings of family traits and tendencies that are at times so remarkable that, in order to satisfy ourselves, we must accept either the theory of reincarnation or that of heredity (1.4).

In the same vein, another biographer observes: 'Narendra bore a striking resemblance to the grandfather who had renounced the world to lead a monastic life, and many thought that the latter had been reborn in him.'<sup>4</sup>

That renunciation was running in the blood of Narendranath could be seen from the detachment and humanism he exhibited right from his childhood:

The youngster developed a special fancy for wandering monks, whose very sight would greatly excite him. One day when such a monk appeared at the door and asked for alms, Narendra gave him his only possession, the tiny piece of new cloth that was wrapped around his waist. Thereafter, whenever a monk was seen in the neighbourhood, Narendra would be locked in a room. But even then he would throw

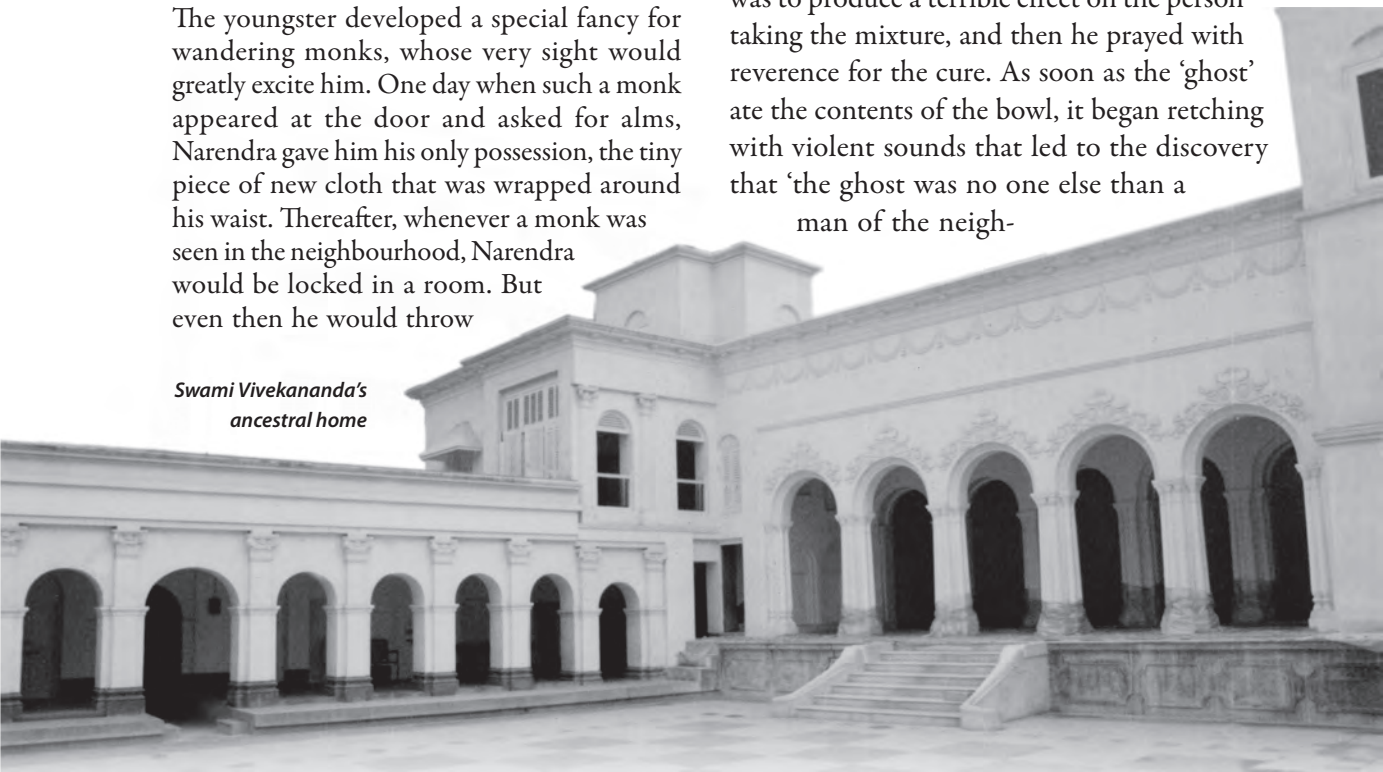
out of the window whatever he found near at hand as an offering to the holy man (11–12).

If the renouncing grandfather had given Narendranath the tendency towards monastic life, his grandmother Shyamasundari's courage in accepting the responsibility of bringing up a child left to her care gave Narendranath the trait of fearlessness. 'Be strong and fearless in accepting life and never run away from it' was Vivekananda's manly approach to the human development he preached later in life.

Narendranath's inheritance from his maternal grandfather Nandalal<sup>5</sup> was scientific rationalism and daring to expose liars and cheats. Nandalal's daring, which underscored his rational and scientific approach to life, is best seen in the incident described below.

There was a man in Nandalal's locality who claimed that he could raise ghosts in a certain 'house of ghosts', and that the ghosts could cure people from their ailments. On the appointed evening Nandalal offered the 'ghost' a bowl of milk-rice in which he mixed some chemical that was to produce a terrible effect on the person taking the mixture, and then he prayed with reverence for the cure. As soon as the 'ghost' ate the contents of the bowl, it began retching with violent sounds that led to the discovery that 'the ghost was no one else than a man of the neigh-

*Swami Vivekananda's  
ancestral home*



bourhood who in collusion with another man was carrying on this spooky trick!<sup>6</sup>

Like the case cited here, Swami Vivekananda fought throughout his life against all irrational and mercenary approaches to religion and life. Referring particularly to belief in ghosts as also in the auguries of birds, monkeys, and soothsayers Swamiji regretted that the place of religion was taken by these 'creepy things that paralyse the brain' (144), and worked heart and soul to restore religion to its rightful role of raising humanity to divinity.

In Raghumani Devi,<sup>7</sup> the maternal grandmother of Narendranath, two virtues were prominent: devotion and compassion. She was a devout Vaishnava and voracious reader of the Puranas and the Bhagavata. Many of the mythological and Bhagavata stories that Vivekananda later related to his Western audiences were those that he had first heard during his childhood from his maternal grandmother.<sup>8</sup> When Goodwin, the English disciple and stenographer of Vivekananda, came to visit her in her residence in Calcutta in 1896, she looked upon him as a good Vaishnava. Bhupendranath observes that her realization that Goodwin could be considered a Vaishnava reminds one of the descriptions to be found in *Narada Bhakti Sutra*: 'In them such distinctions as caste, learning, beauty, family background, wealth, profession, and so on are never present.'<sup>9</sup> No wonder that Narendranath, the grandson of such a noble lady, became in the fullness of time the preacher of the spiritual equality of all souls.

Raghumani Devi was compassionate too. She gave shelter in her own house<sup>10</sup> to her widowed daughter Bhubaneshwari and grandchildren, including Narendranath, after they were thrown out from their ancestral house at Simulia in the wake of the death of Vishwanath, Narendranath's father. She sold four cottahs of land<sup>11</sup> she owned

at Balaram Dey Street in Calcutta in order to enable them to fight the lawsuit that the evicting relatives, headed by a wicked aunt, brought against them. If Vivekananda's universal heart melted and wept at the misery of all the deprived people of the world, the root could be traced to the experiences he had undergone in his formative years within the setting of his own family.

### **Bhubaneshwari Devi**

Narendranath's mother Bhubaneshwari Devi was deeply religious. For two years before Narendranath's birth she kept fasting and praying to Vireshwar Shiva of Varanasi with the purpose of having a pure child. And when the child was finally born she gave it the name of the deity she prayed to: Vireshwar. The family, however, named the child Narendranath, 'lord of men'. Both the names were eminently justified in the future life of Vivekananda, as he proved to be both a leader of men and a maker of gods of men. Romain Rolland notes that the greatest thing about Swamiji was his kingliness, a man who, consistent with his human philosophy, never showed any sense of subordination, weakness, or trace of inferiority to anybody, however high or mighty he or she was: 'But his pre-eminent characteristic was kingliness. He was a born king and nobody ever came near him either in India or America without paying homage to his majesty.'<sup>12</sup>

Vivekananda, called Bileh or Naren for short during his childhood, was a boy of unlimited energy, and it was a hard task for his mother to keep this basically good-natured boy in check. She however found a solution to this problem: if the boy would go too far in expressing his childish fancies, she would simply pour water on his head uttering 'Shiva! Shiva!', and instantaneously the boy would be quiet. Reminiscing of Narendranath in her old age to some



of the Western disciples of Vivekananda, Bhubaneshwari, legitimately proud of her son, would say jokingly that she prayed to Shiva for a son and Shiva sent one of his demons instead!<sup>13</sup>

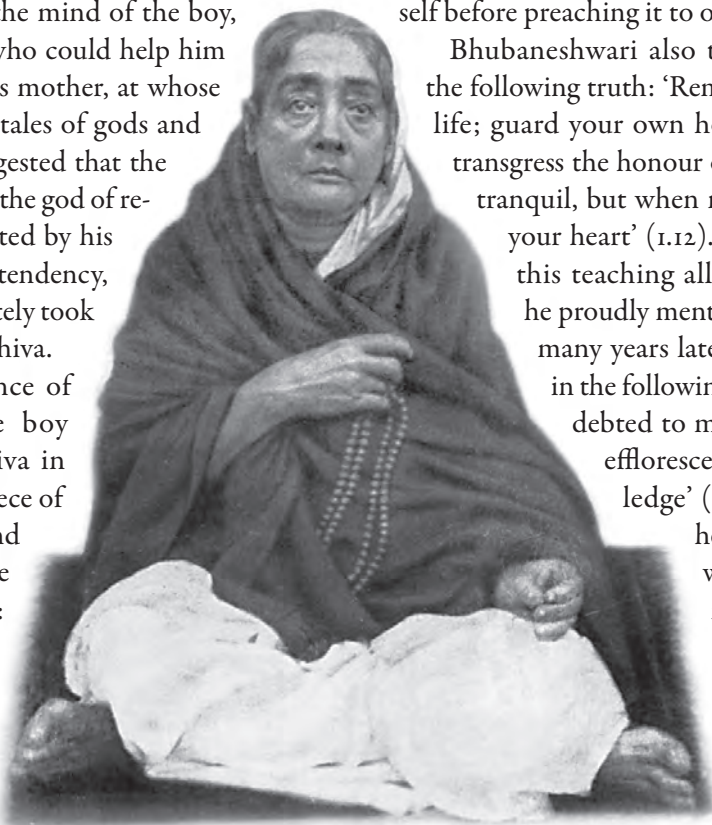
Bhubaneshwari was the child's first teacher, teaching him the Bengali alphabet and some English words. She would narrate to the boy stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The heroic struggles of Rama would so impress the boy that he once bought clay images of Rama and Sita, installed them in a secluded corner of a room on the roof of the house, and worshipped them with flowers and garlands. But his worship of Rama came to an end when the coachman of the family, a very special friend of his—he would adore his headgear, livery, and the whip with which he would make way for the horses—told him that marriage is such a bondage in life that anyone who courted it could not be a hero worthy of worship. This created a crisis in the mind of the boy, and the only one who could help him overcome it was his mother, at whose knee he heard the tales of gods and goddesses. She suggested that the boy worship Shiva, the god of renunciation. Prompted by his inherent monastic tendency, Narendra immediately took to the worship of Shiva.

As a consequence of this worship the boy would imitate Shiva in putting on just a piece of ochre loin-cloth and in moving about the house with the cry: 'I am Shiva! Look, I am Shiva!'<sup>14</sup> Another effect of his worshipping

Shiva was the habit to meditate, which he developed later. He would sit before the image of Shiva and meditate so deeply that he would lose all outer consciousness. Not even a cobra would be able to rouse him on such occasions. No wonder that a boy such as this would later preach to humanity the glory of transcendental life and the inexpressible bliss that follows from the pursuit of such a life.

Bhubaneshwari also gave her child another kind of education, which stuck to him for the rest of his life. His geography teacher unfairly treated Narendra in school when the former made a mistake and the boy rightly corrected him. To this complaint Bhubaneshwari taught him that he should always hold on to truth, even if the consequences were unpleasant. His own addition to the moral precept taught by his mother was that truth must be experienced before being preached. One must find it out oneself before preaching it to others.

Bhubaneshwari also taught Narendra the following truth: 'Remain pure all your life; guard your own honour and never transgress the honour of others. Be very tranquil, but when necessary, harden your heart' (1.12). He remembered this teaching all his life. Indeed, he proudly mentioned his mother many years later to an audience in the following words: 'I am indebted to my mother for the efflorescence of my knowledge' (ibid.). Elsewhere he also said that he was indebted to his mother for whatever religious culture he had.<sup>15</sup>



*Bhubaneshwari Devi*

Bhubaneshwari's fitting utterance to her son stemmed from an incident when he was six years old. He took a younger boy, a relative, to the Charhak fair, where worship used to be offered to Shiva through acts of painful physical feats. While returning home the younger boy was about to be run over and crushed by the galloping horses of a carriage. In an instant, at a great risk to his own life, Narendra jumped before the galloping horses and rescued the boy almost from under the horses' hoofs. When Bhubaneshwari heard of this, she wept in joy and said to him: 'Always be a man, my son!'<sup>16</sup> No advice had ever become truer in the life of Vivekananda. He made this the motto of his life, being a man himself and devoting his life towards making men of others.

### **Vishwanath Datta**


The most valuable inheritance that Narendra received from his father Vishwanath was large-heartedness. Vishwanath suffered much in life. Forsaken at the age of three by a father who took to the life of a monk, he was left to the mercy of an unsympathetic uncle, Kaliprasad, whom Bhupendranath, Narendra's youngest brother, likened to a wolf. Kaliprasad forced Vishwanath to surrender his share of the ancestral house and later forced Bhubaneshwari to part with the title deed of a landed property in the Sunderbans that belonged to her. Any other person would have revolted against the injustice and persecution suffered at the hands of one's own uncle, but not Vishwanath. He was anguished and yet forgiving: 'The orphaned boy received at the hands of his uncle the kind of treatment that orphans generally receive in this world. Yet, all through his life Vishwanath revered and generally helped the uncle, though he was well aware that he had been cheated by him at every step' (1.4).

The young Narendra inherited this trait of his

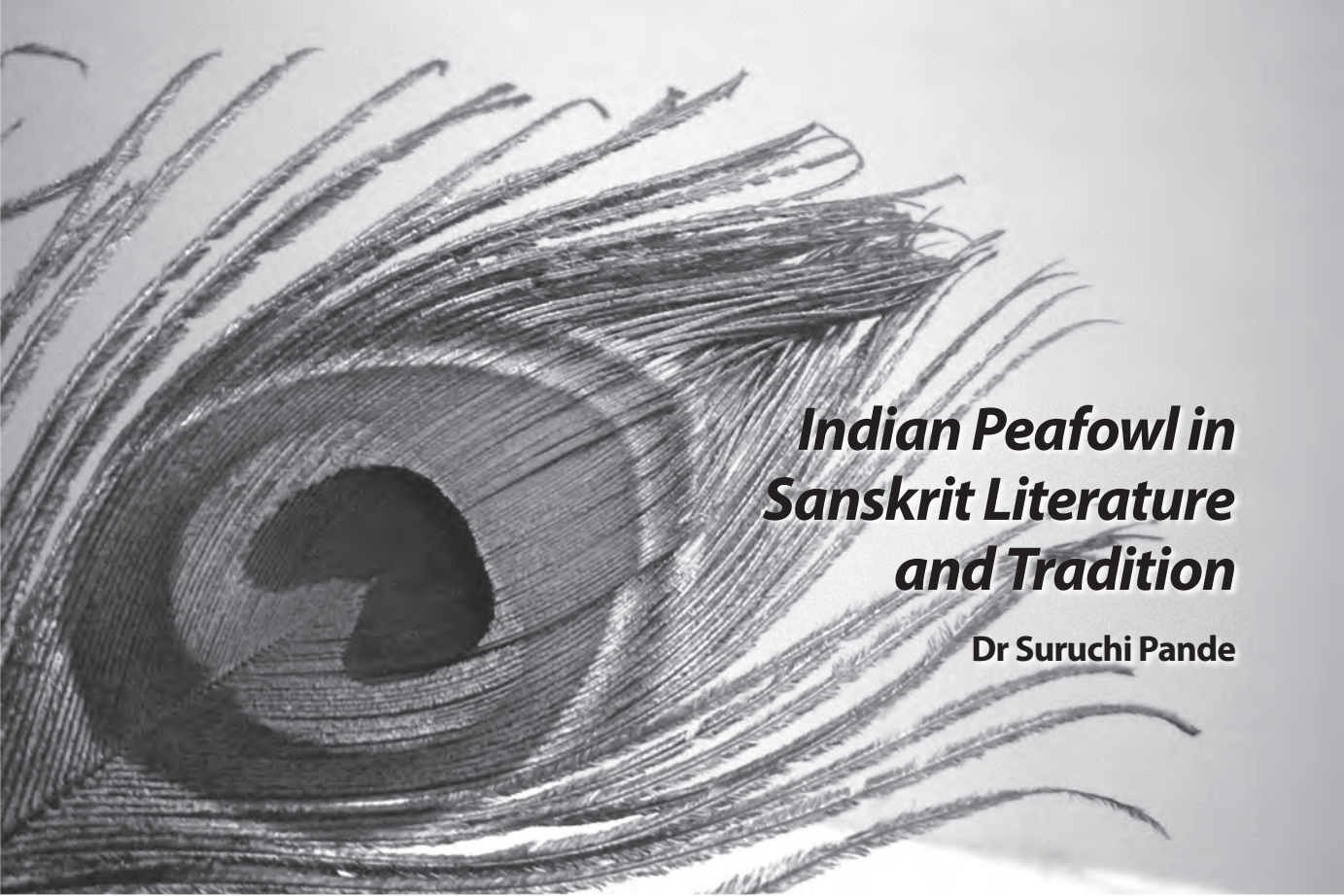
father. He must have noticed even at his young age that Kaliprasad persecuted his parents and yet, when the old man on his deathbed asked the assembled children to read from the Mahabharata to him, Narendra alone came forward and read so earnestly that the dying man, before breathing his last, said: 'Child, you have a great future before you' (1.25).

Narendra was equally charitable to Kaliprasad's daughter-in-law, an aunt by relation. She brought a lawsuit against Narendra's mother, seeking to evict her and her children from the ancestral house. The aunt lost the suit both on the original and appellate sides and yet, towards the end of her life when she appealed to Vivekananda for succour, he helped her with a large sum in cash.<sup>17</sup>

The boy, who would give away to wandering monks whatever he could lay his hands on, saw from close quarters the charitable acts of his father. Vishwanath earned a lot of money as a successful attorney of the Calcutta High Court, only to give his earnings away to the needy, including students seeking education as well as some lazy members of the joint family of the Dattas who were given to drinking.<sup>18</sup> Even Narendra raised objections against doing charity to such relatives, to whom Vishwanath gave a disarming reply: 'How can you understand the great misery of human life? When you realize it, you will sympathize with the poor creatures who try to forget their sorrows in the momentary oblivion obtained through intoxicants!' (1.6-7).

Swamiji combined this understanding of human misery and sympathizing with the poor learnt from his father with his mother's dictum: 'Always be a man, my son!' He was his mother's Vireshwara and father's Artanatha rolled into one, the one who built on the foundation received from his family a humanistic approach to the development of *man*. 

(References on page 365)



## Indian Peafowl in Sanskrit Literature and Tradition

Dr Suruchi Pande

**M**AYURA, THE INDIAN PEAFOWL—*pavo cristatus*—is the national bird of India. The peafowl, known since Vedic times, is one of the most beautiful and gorgeous birds, and is easy to tame. The peafowl has adorned flags, thrones, coins, and crowns. According to Ayurveda, the peafowl is classified under the group named *vishikira*, the bird that eats by scattering.<sup>1</sup> The peafowl scratches the ground and scatters the leaf litter with its strong feet when it forages. The peafowl has been known and venerated in many cultures, particularly of Asia. In the Buddhist Jataka literature—*Mora Jataka*, *Baveru Jataka*, and *Mahamora Jataka*<sup>2</sup>—Buddha was born, in three of his past incarnations, as a beautiful golden peafowl. In Buddhism the goddess Mahamayuri has three heads, is green in colour, and has a peafowl as her vehicle. Since the peafowl presents a fine blend of all the colours of the spec-

trum, though it has a special display of green, the Tibetan culture views green as the combination of all the colours.

One of the many epithets of the goddess Tara is *janguli*, who prevents and cures snake-bites, and is worshipped by the Buddhists.<sup>3</sup> The peacock is her symbolic animal. In the Tibetan tradition an arrangement of six peafowl feathers in a fan-like fashion is used to sprinkle sacred water held in special vessels. The feathers are the symbol of compassion and morality due to their capacity to absorb the poison of *kleshas*, afflictions, like anger, greed, and ignorance.<sup>4</sup> In Japan Mahamayuri is known as the deity Kujaku-myoo and is represented as seated on a peacock.

The peacock was also associated with the Middle Eastern deity Tammuz, who was the consort of the goddess Anat. In Greece it was sacred to Hera, the consort of Zeus—a pair of them drew



her chariot. In Rome the peacocks were Juno's birds, and on coins symbolized the females of the ruling houses. The famous Peacock Throne, seized in plunder by the Persians, was built for Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century. It had behind him two peacocks with tails expanded, which were inlaid with precious stones of appropriate colours. The well-known Koh-i-noor diamond was placed on it.<sup>5</sup>

Flocks of peacocks and peahens feed in meadows, fields, and on mountain slopes. They surprisingly move at will in thorny shrub land. When alarmed they retire to tall trees as they can take strong short flights. The rains inspire them to dance with trumpeting calls. Males fan out their tail and perform a spectacular dance in front of females in forest clearings. Peacocks require tall leafy trees for roosting and their habitat is generally vegetation along rivers and ravines. They nest on high riverside boulders in thorny thickets and dense undergrowth.

### Synonyms and Vedic References

The famous *Amarakosha* of Amarasimha (4th to 6th century CE) gives these synonyms for the peacock:

*Mayuro barhino barhi*  
*nilakantho bhujangabhuk;*  
*Shikhavalah shikhi keki*  
*meghanadanulasyapi.*  
*Keka vani mayurasya samau*  
*chandrakamechakau;*  
*Shikha chuda shikhandash-cha*  
*picchabarhe napunsake.*

*Mayura*, to go or who cries aloud on earth, according to Monier Williams, is derived probably from the root *ma*—to sound, bellow, roar, bleat; *barhin*, one having a plumage; *nilakantha*, having a blue throat; *bhujangabhuk*, who devours the snake; *shikhavala*, who is crested; *shikhi*, same as *shikhavala*, with the posses-

sive termination 'in' added to the word *shikha*; *keki*, whose calls are known as *keka*; *meghanadanulasin*, one who dances at the sound of thunder of the clouds; *vani*, calls of the peafowl; *chandraya*, having moonlike designs on feathers; *mechaka*, dark blue colour or the eye of a peacock's tail; *chuda*, to conceal; *shikhi*, one having a crest; *picchabarha*, name of the plumage of the peafowl; *napunsaka*, impotent.<sup>6</sup>

Another lexicon *Koshakalpataru* (1644 CE), in the section Simhadivarga (10–12), gives these synonyms:

*Mayuro barhino barhi*  
*prachalaki cha chandraki;*  
*Sitapatrah sitapango*  
*nilakantho bhujangabhuka.*  
*Kanjara-shikhi-menada-*  
*meghanadanulasinah;*  
*Keki shikhavalash-cha*  
*syat-chichhikhandi cha kalapavan.*  
*Kekasya vakchadrastu*  
*mechako stri shikhandaka.*

Some of these synonyms have been explained earlier; the other are: *prachalaki*, one who has *prachala*, a trembling plumage; one who has *chandrakas*, 'eyes' on the tail, is *chandraki*; *sitapanga*, having white corners of the eye; *kanjara*, with the word *kanj* meaning produced from the head; *menada*, who makes the sound 'me'—*me*, is an onomatopoeic word; *kalapavana*, one having the tail.<sup>7</sup>

Hemachandra, in his *Abhidhanachintamani* (1089–1172 CE) gives some new synonyms: *nritya-priya*, fond of dance; *sthiramada*, who is intoxicating, who causes a lasting effect; *mechaka*, dark blue colour; *marjarakantha*, one that calls like a cat; the word *maru* in *maruka* means wilderness; *bahulagriva*, having a thick or large neck; *nagavasa*, mountain or tree-dweller.<sup>8</sup>

The *Vaijayantikosha* of Yadavacharya (c. 1050 CE) gives other synonyms, which contain some

new words as *varshamada*, one rejoicing in the rains; *chitrapatraka*, having variegated feathers; *chitrapingala*, bright yellow or gold coloured; *darvanda*, whose eggs have a hard shell; *chandrakirti*, with *chandra*, moon, and *kirti*, fame, referring to the well-known 'eyes like moons' on peacock's tail.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Kalpadrakosha* (1660 CE) we find some new synonyms for *mayura*: *garalavrata*, who observes the vow of swallowing the venom; *guru-marjaranilebhya-kantha*, who has blue throat and whose calls are like a cat; *patradhya*, who is rich in feathers; *tilashikhi* is explained as the peafowl; *chitramekhala*, one having variegated girdle—this term refers to the plumage.<sup>10</sup>

Other lexicons like the *Trikandashesha* (1050–1159 CE) of Purushottamadeva and Mankha's *Mankhakosha* (1120–70 CE) have similar references to the *mayura*. The *Shabdakalpadruma* of Raja Radhakanta Dev (1784–1867 CE) has almost the same references, except for *dhvaji*, bearing a banner or a mark, and *meghanandi*, one who rejoices on seeing clouds.

Right from the Rig Veda one finds references to the peahens, which can digest poison.

*Trihsapta mayuryah*  
*sapta svasaro agruvah;*  
*Taste visham vi jabhrira*  
*udakam kumbhiniriva.*

So have the peahens three-times-seven, so have the maiden Sisters Seven; carried thy venom far away, as girls bear water in their jars.<sup>11</sup>

*A mandrairindra haribhiryahi*  
*mayuraromabhihi;*  
*Ma tva ke chinni yamanvim*  
*na pashino'ti dhanveva tam ihi.*

Come hither, Indra, with Bay Steeds, joyous, with tails like peacock's plumes; let no men check thy course as fowlers stay the bird: pass over them as over desert lands (3.45.1).

There is another reference in the Rig Veda (8.1.25) to Indra's steeds whose tails resemble peacocks' tails, *mayurashepya*.

In the Yajur Veda one comes across: *Ashvibhyam mayuran*; let the *mayura* (be offered) to the Ashvins (the twin deities).<sup>12</sup>

And in the Atharva Veda:

*Adanti tva pipilika vi vrishchanti mayuryah;*  
*Sarve bhala bravatha sharkotamarasam visham.*

Ants devour thee, peahens hack thee to pieces; yea every one of you shall declare the poison of the *sharkota* is powerless.<sup>13</sup>

The word *shara* means spotted, or variegated, or green colour; *kota* means crookedness. The author of this mantra might have seen the peahen eating a variegated or green coloured snake.

There are other references in the *Aitareya Aranyaka* to the *mayura-griva*, neck of the peacock;<sup>14</sup> and in the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* to the *mayuraro-mabih*, down or fine soft hair of the peacock.<sup>15</sup>

### Mayura's Beauty and Augury

Sanskrit literature has many references describing the peafowl's beautiful plumage, and its cackles were said to animate lush green forests. There is also an appreciation of how the peafowl welcomes the rains. To quote some representative verses from the Ramayana:

*Etan vitrasitan pashya*  
*barbinah priyadarshanam;*  
*Evam avishatah shailam*  
*adhi-vasam patatrinam.*

(Bharata says:) Behold these peafowl, which are (so) delightful to look at and are greatly frightened (by the sight of the army), hastening thus towards the mountain, the abode of birds.<sup>16</sup>

The Chitrakuta Mountain is said to resound with peacock calls:

*Drakshyase drishtiramyani  
giriprasravanani cha;  
Ramaniyanyaranyani  
mayurabhirutani cha.*

You will see springs on mountains  
charming to the eye and beautiful  
forests resounding with the noise of  
peafowl (3.8.15).

*Mayuranadita ramyah  
pranshavo bahukandarab;  
Drishyante girayaha saumyah  
phullaistarubhiravrita.*

Here are seen lofty and charming  
mountains made noisy by peafowl,  
having many caves and covered with  
trees, in blossom (Oh, gentle Laksh-  
mana) (3.15.14).

*Kvachit-pranrittai kvachidun-  
nadhahhi kvachit-cha  
vrikshagranishannakayai;  
Vyalambabarhabharanair-  
mayurairvaneshu samgitam  
-iva pravrittam.*

(Nay) music with dancing has been  
set in operation as it were in the woodlands by  
peafowl merrily dancing at one place, crying  
loudly (like singers) at another and resting else-  
where with their bodies supported on treetops  
as though witnessing the dancing and listening  
to the music and with their jewel-like tails hang-  
ing loose (4.28.37).

Elsewhere there are references to the graceful  
dance of the peafowl. The green beauty of dense  
forests is necessarily associated with peacocks.  
Ravana's residence is described as crowded by  
peafowl. In the Mahabharata the peafowl is de-  
scribed as *bhujagashana*, one which devours the  
snakes. In other place it is said:

*Nityam rakshita mantrah  
syad yatha mukha sharachshikhi.*

In the autumn the peafowls remain silent.<sup>17</sup>



The ashramas where sages and their disciples  
dwelt were necessarily associated with the pea-  
fowl. It is said that the peafowl stopped dancing  
when they heard Sita cry out.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in Ka-  
lidasa's *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* (4th century  
CE) the peafowl are said to have stopped dancing  
out of sorrow as Shakuntala was leaving for her  
husband's house.<sup>19</sup>

The snake and the peafowl are great enemies,  
but in summer they stop fighting for a while, as  
they are tormented by the sun's scorching heat.  
This observation is reflected in one verse of Ka-  
lidasa's *Ritusamhara*:

*Ravermayukhair-abhitapito bhrisham  
vidahyamanah pathi taptapamsubhih;  
Avanmukho jimhagatibi shvasan muhuh  
phani mayurasya tale nishidati.*



Being greatly scorched by the rays of the sun and parched in the way dust, a snake with its mouth turned downwards (and) moving tortuously is lying under (the shadow of) a peafowl, taking rapid breath.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Raghuvamsham* it is said that 'the peafowl in the city of Ayodhya are sitting on the trees because their eggs have been hatched. They have stopped dancing because there is no sound of the *mridanga* (a drum). They can be compared to the wild peacocks whose plumages are burnt due to the forest-fire.'<sup>21</sup>

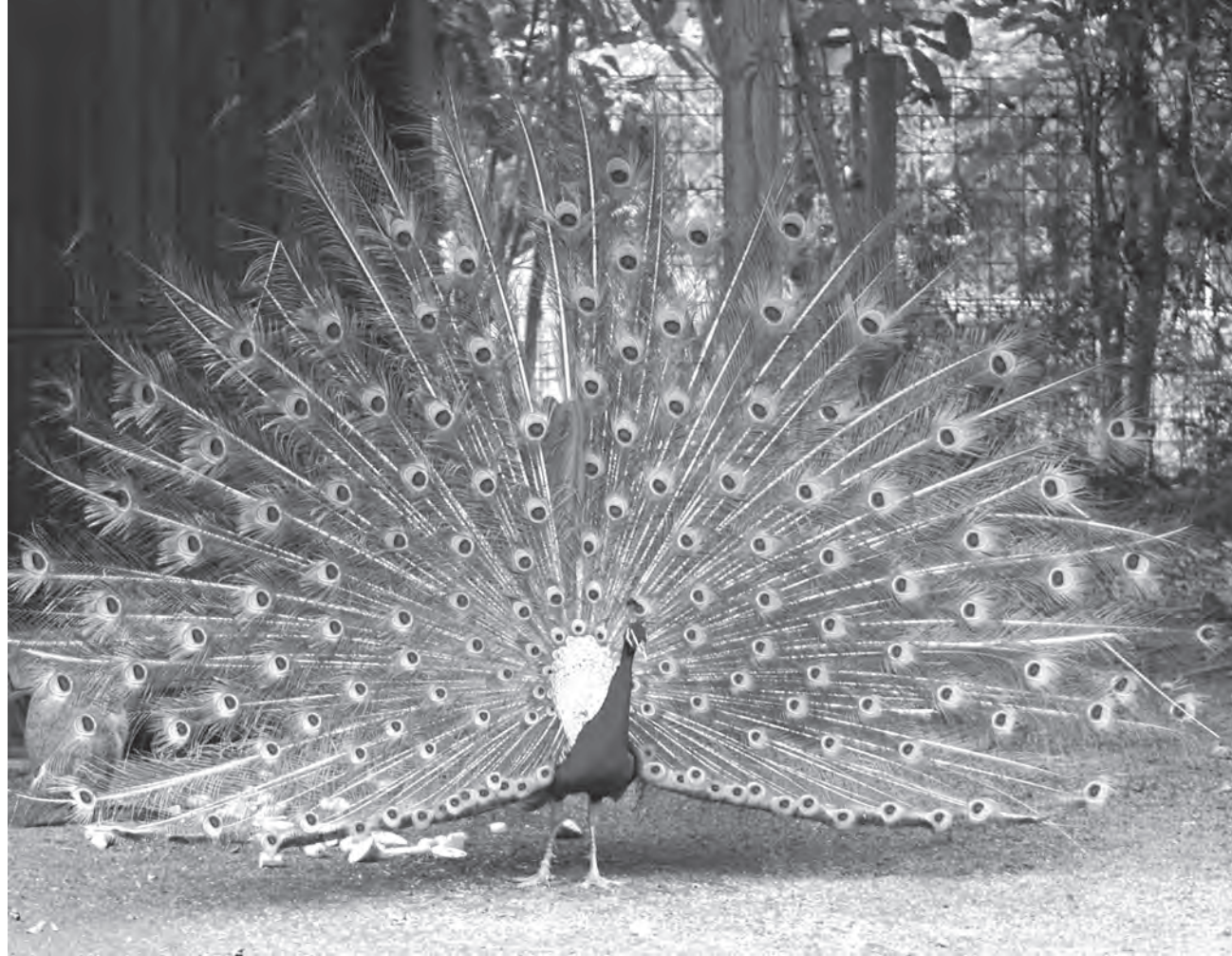
In ancient times the peafowl were commonly domesticated. *Ananda Ramayana* (15th century CE) describes the garden visited by King Rama and Queen Sita. It was full of peacock calls. It seemed as if the peacocks were welcoming people.<sup>22</sup> In the *Bhagavata* it is said: 'There the musical humming of inebriated honeybees and the sweet cooing of kokilas delighted one's ears, while one's eyes feasted on the sight of dancing peacocks and of flocks of birds in heat.'<sup>23</sup> In *Vikramorvashiyam* (4th century CE) there is a perfect reference to the domestic peacock. A child says:

*Yah suptavanmadanke  
shikhandakanduyanopalabhasukbah;  
Tam me jatalapam presaya  
manikanthakam shikhinam.*

Send me my peafowl (named) Manikanthaka that used to rest on my lap and that felt always happy by my tickling his crest when he fluffs his full plumage.<sup>24</sup>

*Alokayati payodanprabala-  
purovatataditashikhandah;  
Keka garbhena shikhi  
duronnamitena kanthena.*

A peacock with his crest ruffled by the rough fore wind looks at the clouds with his neck far up stretched and is about to give shrill cries of joy (4.8).



*Jalodgirnair-upachitavapuh  
keshasamskaradhupair-bandhupritya  
bhavanashikhibhir-dattanrityopaharah;  
Harmeshvayah kusumasurabhishvadhva-  
khedam nayetha lakshminim pashyan  
lalitavanitapadaragankiteshu.*

With your form augmented by the (smoke of the) incense used for perfuming the hair and escaping through the lattices of the windows and welcomed with presents in the form of their dancing by the domestic peacocks through fraternal affection. Do you dispel the fatigue of your journey enjoying the beauty

PEACOCK: BY WILLIAM WARBY / FLICKR

therein, in its mansions, sweet smelling with flowers and marked with red lac (applied to) the feet of graceful ladies.<sup>25</sup>

*Utpashyami drutamapi sakhe  
matpriyartham yiyasoh kalakshepam  
kakubhasurabhau parvate parvate te;  
Shuklapangaih sajanayanaih svagatikritya  
kekah pratyudyatah kathamapi bhavan  
gantumashu vyavasyet.*

I foresee, O friend, that though you are desirous of going quickly for doing me an agreeable service (or, for the sake of my beloved) there will be

delay on your part on every mountain fragrant with the *kutaja* flowers, greeted by peacocks with eyes full of the tears (of joy), with their cries made to serve as words of welcome. I hope you will somehow try to travel rapidly (22).

*Kalidasa* says in his *Raghuvamsham* that the earth, which has become wet due to the new fresh drops of rain, welcomes the clouds heartily by the *kekas* of the peacocks.<sup>26</sup>

*Manobhiramah shrunvantau  
rathanemisvanonmukhaih;  
Shadjasamvadinih keka dvidha  
bhinnah shikhandibhibh.*

They listened to the ravishing notes of the peacocks, which raised their necks as soon as they heard the rattling of the wheels—notes of a double kind and corresponding in pitch to *shadja* (1.39).

The *Kiratarjuniyam* (580 CE) and the *Malati-madhava* (700–36 CE) describe the calls of the peacock as *madamadhura*, sweet voice due to intoxication.<sup>27</sup> Banabhatta (7th century CE) describes them thus:

*Latamandapa-talam-shikhandi-  
mandalarabhya-tandavabbih.*

The peacocks were dancing under the canopy of creepers by forming a circle.<sup>28</sup>

This type of event is actually seen by the ornithologists. It is called *mornachi* in Marathi. And in the *Harshacharita* one sees Banabhatta's minute observation while describing a white cloth: 'Shikhandapangapanduni-dukulapattaprabhave; as white as the corners of peacock's eyes.'<sup>29</sup> Kavi-*raja*, in his *Raghavapandaviyam* (12th century CE), mentions that during the rainy season the beautiful plumage of the peacocks is not seen.<sup>30</sup>

(To be concluded)



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# ***Human Development: Translating Vivekananda's Ideas into Numbers***

**Prof. Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee**

**S**WAMI VIVEKANANDA WAS NOT only a great spiritual teacher who explicated the teachings of his master Sri Ramakrishna and strove for their dissemination and application in practice, he was also a great social philosopher. Through his study of philosophy and the social history of different countries, as well as the exposure to the workings of different societies, he had drawn various conclusions about the movement of societies. He was passionately concerned about the progress of all societies and of humankind in its entirety. Various hints about how this progress can be brought about in practice are scattered throughout his sayings and writings.<sup>1</sup>

He conceived of human development as a holistic programme that should aim at manifesting the full potential of every member of society and, in the process, take society forward collectively. Swamiji presented these concepts to the world more than half a century before the United Nations came into existence and codified its concern for the welfare of all humankind through the Charter on Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which takes into account non-economic constituents in the construction of its development indices. In this paper my purpose is to present, in an organized form, Swamiji's ideas of human development and to show that these lend to quantification in terms of numerical indices that are more comprehensive than the Human Development Index (HDI) of the UNDP and some other indices that have been proposed in that literature.

## ***Holistic Individual Development***

Swami Vivekananda based his thesis of human development squarely on the view of the world and the Reality behind it, as expounded in the philosophical system of Vedanta. However, although he accepted the monistic ontology, he did not stress the illusory nature of the world and the need for its sublation. Instead, he emphasized the potential divinity of each individual soul and the manifestation of that divinity as the goal of human life. Basic to the scheme of human development at the collective level that he presented was his emphasis on the principle that the many and the One are the same Reality, that the manifold is not valueless because it is through the many that we reach the One (4.51). I have formulated four fundamental tenets of Vedanta in a form that would be useful for the subsequent development. Support for these tenets, apart from being available in the Vedantic literature, can be found in many places in the lectures and writings of Swami Vivekananda.<sup>2</sup> These will form our starting point for developing Vivekananda's ideas of human development at the individual as well as the collective level.

(i) There is a unitive sentient 'existence' in the empirical world, which though immanent in it also transcends it. This existence, called cosmic Self, is infinite, indivisible, irreducible, immutable, beyond time, beyond the reach of the senses and the rational mind, and is absolutely free. It is of the nature of pure Consciousness.



(ii) All energy, knowledge, and happiness that we see in the empirical world originate from the cosmic Self; these manifest themselves unequally in the empirical world. Various adjuncts—such as location, mass, dimensions, intensity, species, race, gender, beauty, power, longevity, influence, and so forth—of objects of the empirical world are generated through such manifestation, but these do not affect the cosmic Self.

(iii) Underlying the body and mind of every person there is the individual Self, which is the essence of a person's being and causes the 'I-ness' of the person. It is shorn of all bodily and mental adjuncts, and is sentient, immutable, and free.

(iv) The individual Self of every person is identical with the cosmic Self and is distinguishable from the latter only indirectly, in terms of the adjuncts represented by the person's body-mind complex. As such, the individual Self of one person is non-different from that of another.

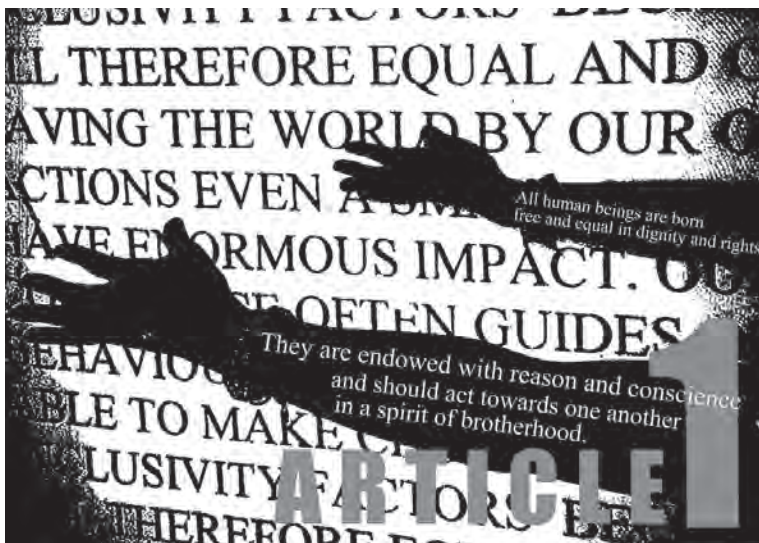
The key concept in Swami Vivekananda's ideas of human development is the development of the individual. The above tenets imply that all miseries and sense of imperfection in an individual's life arise, in the ultimate analysis, because the individual forgets his or her true nature—which is identical with the cosmic Self—and identifies

himself or herself with the limited body-mind complex.<sup>3</sup> If we accept 'removal of misery and attainment of lasting happiness' as the ultimate goal of human life, then it would follow that individuals develop as much as they are able to realize their true identity, or in the language of Swami Vivekananda, manifest their potential divinity.

To examine this more closely we note that the process of growth in a human being's life generally takes place in two overlapping but distinct phases that we call respectively 'outer growth' and 'inner growth'. In the phase of outer growth, set in right from one's birth, a person draws upon external resources to grow in body and mind, to satisfy basic physical and mental cravings, to cultivate relationships and acquire wealth, knowledge, influence, and the like. It is a natural process that takes place objectively in the case of every individual, unless hampered by unfavourable external circumstances. The phase of inner or spiritual—we use the two terms synonymously—growth is represented by those changes in a human being's personality that take one towards one's true identity in the cosmic Self.

Inner growth may not take place significantly in the case of every individual. Generally, in every society, only those members who have achieved

basic outer growth—through adequate nourishment, health care, education, opportunity to work, and other acquisitions—and who at the same time enjoy sufficient personal autonomy and security, can grow along the inner dimension. We say that such a person is 'well-conditioned' for inner growth. As well-conditioned individuals develop, some of them may come to a point when they are no longer satisfied with self-centred outer growth alone and



strive to grow spiritually. As these persons grow spiritually, some among them may reach a stage when, although still far from achieving identity with the cosmic Self, they tend to regard themselves and others as integral parts of a larger whole that they often equate with society or nature. As a result, they manifest to a considerable degree unselfishness, freedom from base impulses, and the capacity to struggle against adversity. We broadly call persons in whom inner growth reaches this stage as 'spiritually well-grown'. If conditions are favourable a rare few among these spiritually well-grown people may be able to expand their ego to the utmost, transcend subjectively the limitations of their body and mind, and discover their true identity in the cosmic Self. We call such persons 'spiritually expanded'. Of course, in the nature of things, no society can expect more than a minuscule fraction of those spiritually well-grown to become spiritually expanded.<sup>4</sup>

From the Vedantic principles enunciated above it follows that as one advances along the path of inner growth, certain traits automatically show up in one's personality. Firstly, one feels an increasing sense of solidarity with others and realizes that one's own happiness depends on that of others as well. On the emotional plane this solidarity expresses itself as genuine love not only for one's family or community or nation, but for the entire humanity—of the past, present, and future. It even takes a mystical form to embrace the whole of nature. As Swami Vivekananda puts it: 'All are our fellow passengers, our fellow travellers—all life, plants, animals; not only my brother man, but my brother brute, my brother plant; not only my brother the good, but my brother the evil, my brother the spiritual and my brother the wicked.'<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the more one identifies oneself with one's divine essence, which is absolutely free and is not subject to control by any force of the empirical world, the more one feels a sense of freedom.

All the bondages, both physical and mental, that are contrary to one's essential nature, all the pulls of one's selfish lower nature, all the fears weaken their hold on oneself. As one is increasingly able to remain inwardly unaffected by the afflictions of the body and mind, one experiences a reduction of misery and a sense of the bliss that is inherent in the cosmic Self. And lastly, as the sense of identity with the cosmic Self—the repository of all power and knowledge—grows in one's consciousness, one discovers in oneself unlimited strength and knowledge from which one can draw upon. Thus, a tremendous faith in oneself follows in the train of inner development. However, it is to be emphasized that true inner growth shows up in the simultaneous and harmonious manifestation of *all* the above traits. Lopsided manifestation of one or other of the above traits to the exclusion of others does not signify true inner growth.

### **Holistic Collective Development**

Let us now see how Swamiji's conception of individual development as described above leads to a characterization of collective development.

Broadly speaking, human society develops collectively as far as it is able to recognize, consciously or unconsciously, that there is a unitive divine existence present in everything—one of the basic tenets of Vedanta. However, when we speak of human society we are aware of the differences that distinguish its members from each other, their varying stages of evolution, their individualities. Referring to the three categories of individuals suggested in the previous section—well-conditioned, spiritually well-grown, and spiritually expanded—we conclude that a society develops collectively when and to the extent it realizes *all* the following three conditions:

(i) The proportion of well-conditioned individuals increases to attain its ideal value of a hundred per cent.

(ii) The proportion of the spiritually well-grown among the well-conditioned increases.

(iii) The proportion of the spiritually expanded among the spiritually well-grown, even if it does not increase, maintains a positive value.

Condition (i) is the precondition or minimal requirement for collective development. A society in which the proportion of the well-conditioned stagnates at a very low level must be regarded as a 'failed society'. Condition (ii) implies that those who do not remain stalled with outer growth alone and achieve some degree of inner growth have an increasing presence in society. As the proportion of the spiritually expanded among those spiritually well-grown remains very low in every society, in condition (iii) we have required no more than such people who exemplify the acme of individual development have a definite presence.

From conditions (i) to (iii) we derive the following two broad conditions required for every society to attain a high level of development.

(a) The people of a society—ideally all of them—have to be well-conditioned: their basic needs like food, shelter, health care, and essential education are met; they have reasonable scope for developing their individuality through work and for meeting the natural cravings of their body and mind; and further, they have enough security and freedom to pursue individual development along their chosen path. For a society in which this proportion is significantly less than a hundred per cent, a primary concern of development should be to raise it as much as possible, and the extent of success in addressing this issue would be a major factor determining its progress. Our definition of collective development, however, implies that even if all its members are well-conditioned a society may not become truly developed provided the bulk of its members fail to get spiritually awakened.

(b) A substantial proportion of people in society are spiritually well-grown—they consciously or unconsciously strive to live true to the spirit of the Vedantic ideal. Persons who have actualized this ideal and are spiritually expanded have a significant presence. Through their life and teachings they influence the general will of society. The spiritual ideal dominates the thinking and values of the people, and the network of relations in society is also set in tune with it. In short, the general level of inner growth of the members of society is high.

Admittedly, condition (b) as stated is somewhat ethereal in nature. But from the Vedantic tenets enunciated earlier it follows that as this condition becomes more and more realized in a society, the following palpable traits would *all simultaneously* tend to manifest in it to greater and greater degrees:

(1) *Spirit of oneness*: As many people realize their identity with the unitive cosmic Self, a sense of oneness is bound to manifest itself.

(2) *Ambience of freedom*: Since the cosmic Self is absolutely free, a growing number of people discovering their identity with it tend to generate a pervasive sense of freedom in society.

(3) *Spirit of equality*: As the realization that in essence one is not different from another comes, a sense of equality is sure to take hold of the common psyche.

(4) *Absence of gender bias*: Equality of course implies equality across genders—in the Self there is no gender distinction. We make a special mention of this because of its importance.

(5) *Creative activity*: As the members of a society proceed to identify themselves with the cosmic Self, they become conscious of their ability to draw upon the repository of infinite energy, knowledge, and bliss that the latter is, and this results in a spurt of creative activity in society.

(6) *Breadth of awareness*: Who feels one's



identity with the whole of existence can never be narrow-minded; such a person regards all peoples, all living beings, and all objects of nature as their very own and cares for them.

### **Current Thinking on Human Development**

In the next section we shall use Swamiji's holistic conception of development as described above to construct meaningful quantitative indices. But before that, in this section, we briefly review current thinking on this issue. Our purpose is mainly to point out how Swamiji's concept, though a forerunner of current thinking by many decades, captures the notion of human development more comprehensively.

The need for having a measure of the level of development of a country to facilitate macro-economic management was acutely felt in the second quarter of the last century in the wake of the worldwide depression that followed World War I. Initially progress was measured in terms of per capita national income (GDP or GNP) at constant prices. The exercise gained further momentum after World War II through the establishment of the United Nations, which standardized the procedure of measurement of national income. The per capita national income of different countries expressed in a common currency began to be regularly published to make comparison over time and across countries possible. In course of time the method of conversion of different national currencies was also standardized in terms of level of living and a common international currency called the Purchasing Power Parity or PPP was set up. The representing level of development by per capita national income was

however far from satisfactory. Besides ignoring the question of distribution of income among the members of society, it completely bypassed other aspects that seem to be integral to human development. The UN itself had declared in its charter, among other things, its commitment 'to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom' for all peoples. In its Universal Declaration of Human Rights made in 1948, it invoked principles such as 'recognition of the inherent integrity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family', 'not outraging the conscience of mankind', and 'the dignity and worth of the human person' and sought to delineate 'a common standard of achievement for all peoples'. Besides, from time to time, many social philosophers voiced their dissatisfaction with per capita national income and emphasized the need of taking into account non-economic aspects of development. Prominent among them were John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Ronald Dworkin, John Roemer, and Robert Nozick.<sup>6</sup>

Arguably the most influential among these thinkers has been Sen, who through his capability approach to development has been relentlessly emphasizing the human aspect of well-being.<sup>7</sup> Sen regards a person's life as a bundle of valued

## **ARTICLE 15**

**EVERYONE has the right to a nationality**



'functionings' or 'beings and doings' related to different compartments of life, each 'functioning' having a number of alternative choices. An achievable combination of choices over the different 'functionings' is a 'capability' and the 'set of all capabilities' represents the individual's substantive freedom and well-being. On this count wider the capability set, the better off the individual. At the collective level the ensemble of capability sets of the members of a community gives the complete picture of its state of development. A change represents collective development if it widens the capability sets of some of the members, without shrinking those of others, and at the same time reduces the inequality among the capability sets. To examine the extent of a person's deprivation we have to confine our attention to a few basic functionings—such as being well-nourished, well-sheltered, getting education, and minimal health care—and the corresponding basic capabilities and then judge the extent of shortfall of the constituent achievable functionings below the corresponding thresholds.

The capability approach regards non-monetary functionings as constitutive dimensions of an individual's well-being in their own right and puts great emphasis on the intrinsic value of freedom in choosing a particular capability. It also attaches great importance to women's agency in terms of the capability sets of women as compared to those of men.<sup>8</sup> The functionings considered by Sen, however, mostly take account of the outer growth of individuals. Insufficient attention is given to the importance of inner growth—to 'becoming' as distinct from 'being and doing'. The freedom of individuals are rightly stressed, but freedom to choose one's mode of living would amount to little if one did not remain alive to the need of being free from the pulls of one's lower nature. At the collective level, exclusive attention to the capabilities leaves

out, or touches only tangentially, some of the elements—such as solidarity—that are essential for the real well-being of any community.

Sen's ideas on human development have influenced the construction of the HDI that the UNDP has been reporting for different countries of the world every year since 1990.<sup>9</sup> In this index the UNDP translates crudely Sen's thinking into practice by replacing the capability set of an individual by his or her achieved combination of functionings. Further, it takes into account only three functionings: (i) leading a long and healthy life, (ii) being knowledgeable, and (iii) enjoying a decent standard of living. The general levels of these over the population are measured respectively by the expectation of life at birth, a suitably weighted average of adult literacy and school enrolment ratios, and the country's per capita GDP at constant prices. The three measures are then converted into suitable indices that lie between 0 and 100, and their simple arithmetic mean is taken as the HDI. The UNDP complements the HDI by certain other indices to take into account other aspects of development, such as poverty and gender disparity.

In recent years some attempts have been made to measure human development by including dimensions of well-being other than the three considered in UNDP's HDI. For instance, Dasgupta<sup>10</sup> takes into account two additional dimensions—political and civil rights—and makes use of available indices of these to find the ranks of forty-six developing countries according to their levels of development. Another question to which attention is being paid recently is that of the sustainability of development over future generations.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, all the above recounted attempts to study human development from a perspective broader than that of economic progress alone involve, in one form or other, an element of adhocery in the choice of

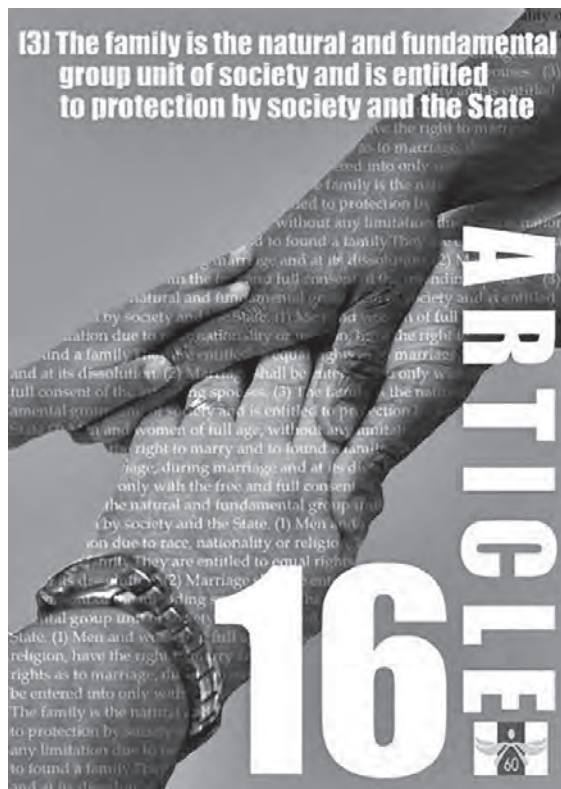
aspects of development based on common sense, intuitive appeal, perceived historical laws of the evolution of societies, or behavioural laws of the intrinsic nature of human beings. Everything in Swami Vivekananda's formulation, on the other hand, follows directly from the Vedantic view of Reality described earlier.

### Quantification of Holistic Development

In this section we show how Swami Vivekananda's conception of holistic development can be quantified in terms of meaningful indices constructed on the basis of available official data. Without such quantification his ideas would look like utopian philosophization bereft of much practical utility. For this we make use of the two broad conditions (a) and (b) characterizing a high level of development as stated under the section on holistic collective development. As the method of construction of the indices involves a lot of statistical technicalities, we will not go into their details and will confine ourselves to, as far as possible, a non-technical presentation of the underlying reasoning.<sup>12</sup>

We quantify the development of a society in terms of two indices,  $W$  and  $I$ , which we call respectively the 'well-conditioning index', representing the degree of attainment of condition (a)—the general level of well-conditioning—and the 'inner growth index', representing the extent of realization of condition (b)—the general level of inner growth. As  $W$  and  $I$  represent distinct aspects of collective development, instead of combining the two into a single index we prefer to keep them separate.

Conceptually, it seems straightforward to measure the degree of a society's well-conditioning. The proportion of individuals who are well-conditioned—who have attained or are in a position to attain adequate outer growth in terms of basic necessities like nutrition, shelter, work-



opportunity, health care, and essential education and at the same time have sufficient personal autonomy and security to be able to develop themselves through inner growth—can be taken as the well-conditioning index  $W$ . But in practice the determination of this proportion from available data is beset with difficulties. Firstly, although nowadays we have separate marginal data on the proportions of people who get more or less adequate nutrition, shelter, work-opportunity, health care, and education for many countries, how can we obtain figures for the proportion of people for whom all these requirements are *simultaneously* met? Nor can we visualize that such figures could be made available for most countries through special surveys in the foreseeable future. Secondly, leaving aside the first question, how can we find what proportion among those who achieve adequate outer growth have sufficient personal autonomy and security?

(To be concluded; references on page 370)



# Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – II

Swami Bhajanananda

**N**EXT TO FOOD what every human being seeks most is love. Love is a hunger that no amount of wealth or knowledge can satisfy. What is love? According to Swami Vivekananda, love is an expression of the sense of unity, identification, the relationship of a soul with another soul. Says Swamiji: 'Love binds, love makes for that oneness. You become one, the mother with the child, families with the city, the world becomes one. ... For love is existence, God Himself; and all this is the manifestation of that One Love, more or less expressed. The difference is only in degree, but it is the manifestation of that one love throughout.'<sup>1</sup>

## Premārpaṇa

The Upanishads speak of unity at two levels: the level of *prāṇa* and the level of Consciousness. *prāṇa* is the universal vital force sustaining all life. Ordinary human love is an expression of the unifying force of *prāṇa*. Love between parents and children, between husband and wife, between friends—all human relationships are expressions of the unity of *prāṇa*. But ordinary human love has several limitations. It is usually found to be self-centred and based on certain conditions. It causes attachment and often changes into hatred. Even if in some cases love is found to be pure and unconditional, it also is impermanent, for human life itself is impermanent. The human soul, however, hungers for boundless, pure, unconditional, eternal, and everlasting love. Enquiry into the true

nature of love led the sages of the Upanishads to the discovery of a higher level of love that was based on the unity of Consciousness. The sages discovered that behind the ever-changing, impermanent, phenomenal world there is the unchanging, eternal, ultimate Reality, which is of the nature of infinite Consciousness known as Brahman. Brahman exists in all beings as the Atman or *pratyagātman*, inner self. This means all individual selves are parts or aspects of Brahman. Love based on this unity of Consciousness is pure, unchanging, unconditional, and eternal. This spiritual love forms the real basis of even ordinary worldly love, although owing to ignorance most people are not aware of this fact. This great idea of the oneness of all selves in the supreme Self as the real basis of human love was propounded more than three thousand years ago by the sage Yajnavalkya. In the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* he teaches his wife Maitreyi: 'The husband is loved, not for the sake of the husband, but for the sake of the (supreme) Self; the wife is loved, not for the sake of the wife, but for the sake of the (supreme) Self.'<sup>2</sup> This idea means that human love is an expression of God's love. True love is divine.<sup>3</sup> This noble, enlightening, and liberating idea remained locked for centuries in sacred scriptures, which were in the possession of a class of privileged people who themselves never applied that idea in practical life. As a result some of the worst forms of social inequality and injustice prevailed in Indian society for centuries until modern times.

It was Sri Ramakrishna who recovered for the modern world the ancient Vedic ideal of love based on the oneness of all selves in the supreme Self or God. He first of all applied it in his own life, in his relationship with his spiritual spouse and his disciples, and in his attitude towards all people. Without making any distinctions of caste or creed he loved all people. It was the divine love emanating from him that drew people to him like a magnet. The rich and the poor, the saintly and the sinful, men and women, Hindus, Brahmos, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs—all felt alike his pure love and benediction. That is why Swami Vivekananda has described Sri Ramakrishna as *premārpaṇa*, one who showered his love on all.

From time immemorial the ideal of God realization has been so much stressed in Indian culture that it has fostered a general tendency to neglect social awareness, concern for the suffering of others, and undervaluation of human love. Sages and saints have taught all through the centuries that love for human beings leads to bondage and is a major obstacle to God realization. Even Buddha warned against *prīti*, love, and advised people to cultivate only *maitri* or *metta*, friendliness. Such an attitude makes spiritual life self-centred and weakens family bonds and social unity. By recovering the ancient Vedic concept of the spiritual foundation of love Sri Ramakrishna has shown the way to harmonize human love and divine love. He made love for man an expression of love for God; human beings are to be loved not as human beings but as embodiments or manifestations of God. Human relationships should be divinized.

Divinization of human relationships is an important contribution of Sri Ramakrishna to world culture. This principle of divinization of human relationships can be applied to all areas of social interaction—between parents and children, between employers and employees, between teach-

ers and students, between doctors and patients, among fellow travellers, among neighbours, and so on. Divinization of relationships prevents misunderstandings, quarrels, and conflicts and fosters friendly cooperation, mutual help, and love.

### Prāṇārpaṇa

The truth that the unity of all selves in the supreme Self is the ultimate basis of human love does not mean that love is mere knowledge. Love expresses itself through action. The famous Lebanese writer and artist Kahlil Gibran wrote: 'Work is love made visible.'<sup>4</sup> It is through work that love manifests itself, validates itself, and authenticates itself. Work done with love is service.

Sri Ramakrishna has revolutionized the whole field of service in India with his concept: '*Śiva jñāne jīva sevā*; serve the jīva knowing it to be Shiva'. Service is generally done with the attitude of compassion, or pity, or out of a sense of duty. Service done with the attitude of compassion creates a sense of superiority and egoism in the person who serves, and a sense of inferiority in the person who is served. But when service is done with the attitude of worship of the living God—worship of God in the human being—it elevates both the doer and the beneficiary. It is this idea that forms the basis of Swami Vivekananda's gospel of social service.

Apart from egolessness and the attitude of worship, the spirit of service also implies the readiness to undergo sacrifice. If one wants to serve people—especially those who are in distress, who are old, sick, poor—one has to sacrifice personal comforts, wealth, time, and energy. Great men and great women are those who sacrifice their all for the welfare of humanity. The greatness of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda lies not only in what they taught, but also in the tremendous spirit of sacrifice that they showed throughout their lives.

Popular biographical accounts of Sri Ramakrishna's life may give the impression that he lived a happy life giving talks, singing, and dancing. But the tremendous concern he had for the welfare of other people, his eagerness to help suffering people, and the difficulties he had to endure for this are seldom noticed. From early in the morning till late in the night Sri Ramakrishna spent most of his time advising, guiding, inspiring, and awakening people who thronged to him. Anybody could walk into his room at any time of the day or night. And nobody who went to him ever returned without receiving something life-transforming, awakening, or strengthening. In the process of redeeming sinners and bohemians he had to undergo vicarious suffering.

Swami Vivekananda as young Naren had noticed all this and that is why he described Sri Ramakrishna as *prāṇārpaṇa*, one who gave his life for others. Referring to Sri Ramakrishna's incessant work of spiritual ministration, Swami Vivekananda stated in his lecture 'My Master': 'So men came in crowds to hear him, and he would talk twenty hours in the twenty-four, and that not for one day but for months and months until at last the body broke down under the pressure of this tremendous strain. His intense love for mankind would not let him refuse to help even the humblest of the thousands who sought his aid.'<sup>5</sup>

### **Divine Yoga, Divine Tapas, Divine Lila**

The real salvific work of the avatara—his work of liberating the jivas—may be said to begin only after he gives up his physical body. He continues to 'work' for the spiritual elevation and guidance of humanity even in the unseen realms. In the Bhagavadgita Sri Krishna states: 'In all the three worlds, O Partha, there is no duty whatever for Me (to fulfil); nothing remains unachieved or to be achieved. (Still) do I continue in action.'<sup>6</sup>

The 'work' of the avatara is not like the physical labour of human beings. The Gita itself describes it in two places as *yogam-aiśvaram*, divine yoga (9.5, 11.8).

In the Upanishads God's work is referred to as tapas. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* states that before creating multiplicity: 'Sa tapo tapyata; He (God) undertook tapas.'<sup>7</sup> The *Mundaka Upanishad* also states that before creation Brahman underwent tapas, explaining that '*yasya jñānamayam tapah*; whose tapas is of the nature of Knowledge.'<sup>8</sup> The *Chhandogya Upanishad* too speaks about the power of divine will: *kratumaya, satyasamkalpa*.<sup>9</sup>

From the above it is clear that the work, the divine yoga, of the avatara is of the nature of knowledge or will. Shankaracharya compares the exercise of the will to the action of a king. The king does not do any work, he only gives orders and his will is immediately carried out by others.

God's work is also regarded as lila, both in Vaishnava and Shakta traditions. About God's lila Sri Ramakrishna says: 'Nitya and Lila. The Nitya is the Indivisible Satchidananda, and the Lila, or Sport, takes various forms, such as the Lila as God, the Lila as the deities, the Lila as man, and the Lila as the Universe.'<sup>10</sup>

The avatara's life, activities, and mission on earth are all a part of God's divine yoga, divine tapas, and divine lila.

### **Identification with Divine Motherhood**

One unique feature of the love that Sri Ramakrishna radiated was its association with divine motherhood. This association took two forms. On the one hand he looked upon himself as a child of the Divine Mother; this attitude of the child towards its mother he called *mātrbhāva*. On the other hand he identified himself with the Divine Mother and had a maternal attitude towards others, especially towards his young dis-



ciples—although this maternal attitude also can be regarded as *mātrbhāva*, it is more commonly known as *vātsalyabhāva*. No contradiction is involved in this dual attitude, for the former is the attitude towards God and the latter is the attitude towards people. Every woman regards herself as the child of her mother and as the mother of her own child. The male and female elements of human personality—animus and anima—were equally developed in Sri Ramakrishna.

Regarding Sri Ramakrishna's *mātrbhāva* the following points are to be noted.

i) The worship of God as the Divine Mother of the universe was prevalent in India from ancient times, perhaps from the pre-Vedic period. At first she was worshipped as one among the several deities. From the sixth century CE the cult of the Devi developed into a separate tradition or sect known as the Shakta tradition. In this tradition the Devi is identified with Shakti, the power of Brahman, and Brahman and Shakti together constitute one Reality, which is of the nature of *cit-śakti*, the supreme Spirit as Power. In Shankaracharya's philosophical works the Divine Mother is not given any place, but later Advaitic tradition identified the Divine Mother with Prakriti and maya. As far as one can gather from

recorded conversations in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and from discussions in Swami Saradananda's *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga*, Sri

Ramakrishna's views on the Divine

Mother do not belong exclusively to any of the above views. He confined

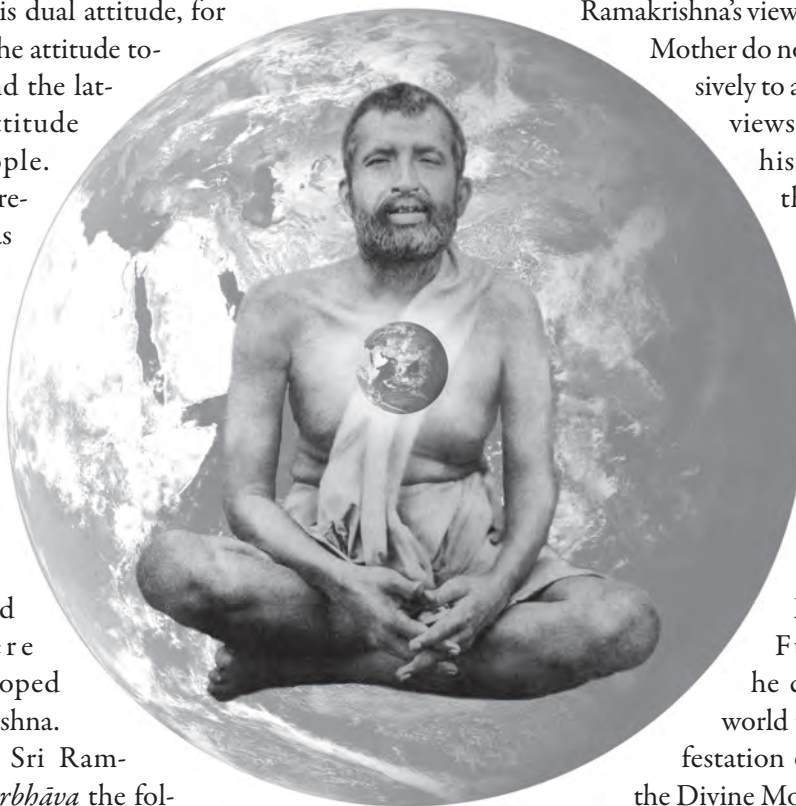
his views within the framework of Vedanta, but he identified the Divine Mother with Brahman: 'That which is Brahman is Shakti, and That, again, is the Mother' (635).

Furthermore, he considered the world to be the manifestation of Brahman as the Divine Mother (ibid.).

From the above it is clear that Sri

Ramakrishna's adoration of the Divine Mother was not merely a matter of sentiment, but was based on his direct realization of its spiritual and metaphysical foundations.

ii) The Vaishnava tradition recognizes five *bhāvas*, attitudes, in establishing a personal relationship with God. These are: *śānta*, the calm attitude; *dāsyā*, the attitude of a servant; *sakhya*, the attitude of a friend; *vātsalya*, the attitude of a mother; and *madhura*, the attitude of a lover. Of these the last one is held to be the highest *bhāva*. In the Shakta tradition, which is more widely prevalent in certain parts of India like Bengal, *mātrbhāva*, the attitude of a child towards its mother, is the dominant spiritual



**Sri Ramakrishna spread broadcast** the idea that, wherever you may be, the Divine Spirit is throbbing in you and waiting for an opportunity to manifest through you. You are all the children of God.

—Swami Bhuteshananda,  
*A Bridge to Eternity*, 141

attitude followed. Apart from this there are millions of Hindus who look upon God as the Divine Mother. Sri Ramakrishna gave the stamp of authenticity and authority to *māṭṛbhāva* and established it as a universal attitude. He pointed out that it is the purest of relationships (572). It is generally held that *madhurabhāva* is the most intense form of devotional mood, but Sri Ramakrishna showed that *māṭṛbhāva* can generate as much intensity, if not more.

iii) Sri Ramakrishna's advocacy of *māṭṛbhāva* has great social significance. He did not restrict this attitude to his relationship with God, but made it a universal attitude towards all women. Motherhood is the glorious aspect of womanhood. When this aspect is stressed every woman gets dignity and self-respect. Moreover, as the nineteenth-century German anthropologist Bachofen showed, motherhood has great cohesive power and can be a unifying factor in social relationships. He states:

The relationship which stands at the origin of all culture, of every virtue, of every nobler aspect of existence, is that between mother and child. It operates in a world of violence as the divine principle of love, of union, of peace. ... Yet the love that arises from motherhood is not only more intense but also more universal. The paternal principle implies limitation to definite groups, but the maternal principle, like the life of nature, knows no barriers. The idea of motherhood provides a sense of universal

fraternity among all men, which dies with the development of the idea of paternity.<sup>11</sup>

Bachofen's ideas influenced Karl Marx, and he conceived the mother, not the family, as the basic unit of the communistic society that he envisioned. But, like his economic theories, his social theories also failed to take into account human limitations. The sense of motherhood of ordinary women is limited by their attachment to their families. If motherhood is to become a universal principle of social bonding and integration, it should be freed from human limitations and raised to the level of divine motherhood. Here comes the social significance of Sri Ramakrishna's worship of the Divine Mother.

iv) Swami Vivekananda used to say that Sri Ramakrishna has through his fervent prayers awakened the Divine Mother Power in the present age. The signs of this awakened Mother Power are there everywhere. All the divine apparitions that have taken place during the past one hundred and fifty years in the Western world—*Lourdes*, *Fatima*, *Medjugorje*, and other places, which attract millions of pilgrims every year—have been visions of the Divine Mother. After three millennia of suppression and exploitation of women the present age is witnessing the ascent of women. Swami Vivekananda believed that women would play a major role in the spiritual transformation of humanity in the future. He said: 'At the present time God should be worshipped as "Mother", the Infinite Energy. ... The new cycle must see the masses living Vedanta, and this will have to come through women.'<sup>12</sup>

It was stated earlier that Sri Ramakrishna's association with divine motherhood has two aspects. We now turn to the second aspect, namely, the maternal attitude towards others. This may also be called *māṭṛbhāva*, though it is more commonly known as *vātsalyabhāva*. Sri Ramakrishna

not only worshipped the Divine Mother but also identified himself with her so completely that he himself came to embody divine motherhood. He used to say that three words—guru, *kartā*, master, and *bābā*, father—pricked him like thorns.<sup>13</sup> But he obviously had no objection to be regarded as mother. Indeed, several of his young disciples like Rakhal, Swami Brahmananda; Tarak, Swami Shivananda; and a few others looked upon him as their mother. While speaking about his *vātsalya*, affection, for Purna and other young disciples, Sri Ramakrishna once said: 'I now feel for Purna and other young boys as I once felt for Ramlala [child Rama whom he used to see as a living being in what mystics call "corporeal vision"]'. I used to bathe Ramlala, feed Him, put Him to bed, and take Him wherever I went. I used to weep for Ramlala. Now I have the same feeling for these young boys' (810). Another day he asked Mahendranath Gupta, the chronicler of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, to bring Narendra, Swami Vivekananda, in a horse-carriage and advised him to have *vātsalyabhāva* towards the youngster.

(To be concluded)

## Notes and References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 2.304.
2. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.5, 4.5.6.
3. This concept is strikingly similar to the famous statement in the New Testament, 'God is love' (John 4.8).
4. Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (Middlesex: Echo Library, 2006), 12.
5. *Complete Works*, 4.185.
6. Bhagavadgita, 3.22.
7. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.6.1.
8. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1.1.8-9.
9. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 3.14.1-2.
10. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 392.
11. J J Bachofen, *Myth, Religion and Mother Right*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton: Princeton University, 1968), 85.
12. *Complete Works*, 7.95.
13. See *Gospel*, 633.

(Continued from page 345)

## Notes and References

1. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 2 vols (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), 1.2.
2. The reference is to a brahmana boy who, by virtue of taking *bhiksha*, alms, from Durgaprasad during the boy's sacred-thread ceremony became the almsgiver's—Durgaprasad's—*putra*, son. This is an age-old custom followed during the sacred-thread ceremony of brahmana boys in Bengal.
3. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.3.
4. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2010), 11.
5. Nandalal belonged to the Basu family of Simulia. They lived near the Dattas in Simulia.
6. Bhupendranath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet* (Calcutta: Nababharat, 1954), 127.
7. Raghupati Devi (1825-1911) belonged to the Ghose family of Beadon Street, Calcutta.
8. See *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.14.
9. *Narada Bhakti Sutra*, trans. Swami Bhuteshananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2003), 174.
10. Her house was located at 7, Ramtanu Bose Lane, Calcutta.
11. Four cottahs is about 2,880 square feet or 268 square metres.
12. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, trans. E F Malcolm-Smith (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), 2.
13. See *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.12.
14. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.17.
15. See Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, 6 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1994), 2.417.
16. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.24.
17. See *Swami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet*, 139-40.
18. See *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.5-6.



# ***Spiritual Training of the Mind***

**Swami Ranganathananda**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

**I**F WHAT IS DONE in work cancels what is done in meditation, then no progress is possible. Let there be reinforcement of the one with the other. Thus, steadily, day by day, spiritual strength comes to the human mind, spiritual sensitiveness comes to the human mind, and if it is divine will, sometime or the other you can experience, 'Yes, I do feel that spirituality is a fact, is a truth.' There is such a thing as the spiritual core of the human personality, touching which we can get an enormous source of strength within ourselves. That sense of peace, that sense of calmness, that sense of fulfilment can come to us by that experience. This is how we struggle day by day. It is not easy, is not a short term one. The whole life has to be dedicated for this work. The fruit is not in our hands, it will come through the grace of God.

The Atman within reveals himself to you. I cannot take him, I cannot catch him, but he reveals himself to you. That is the language used in the Upanishad. The infinite reveals himself to you; the finite cannot have the infinite. By multiplying the finite you don't get the infinite. But at a certain stage the infinite reveals himself to you; self-revelation is the language. God reveals himself to you at a particular stage, just like a grandmother playing hide-and-seek with the grandchildren. When they are tired, the grandmother calls and the children discover her. She reveals herself to the children. That is the example given by a great German mystic. One of the greatest Christian mystics, who was intellectually also very strong. He tells us that God reveals himself to the seeking devotee at a par-

ticular point of his own development. But that development is my own effort. I have to work hard towards it. And suddenly that illumination comes. The Upanishads said therefore: 'To the struggling soul the Atman reveals himself.' That's the language used. That struggle is our part. Revelation belongs to the Lord's part.

In this way by spiritually training the mind we feel our life richer, purer, nobler. What a wonderful achievement for a man it would be! Real growth in the inner dimension. External dimension, we have plenty of science and technology. Inner dimension comes only through the great science of religion, science of spirituality. Once that strength comes life in the world becomes easy, you won't get submerged in the world, you can handle the world just like learning to swim. You get into the lake, you have no fear; you always float. So also this spiritual strength comes to us step by step, and it becomes easier to handle the world outside.

Every step of growth in the inner life has a corresponding blessing in our external life. More of calmness, more of happy feelings with other human beings—all these things can become possible through our spiritual development. Today one big subject that comes all over the world is management. How to manage human beings? Here is a director dealing with a large number of staff. How to manage? Human management is a big subject today, and that too in a democratic context, not in a feudal context. Previously you could manage with a stick, everybody would obey you for fear of punishment. Today you can-

not do that. Every human being has a sense of integral value. How shall we do so? Then comes the subject: The more spiritual you are, the more inward you are, the more you are able to handle other human beings in a sensitive human way, because you have seen something deep in you. You are able to go deep into other individuals so that a humanized management becomes possible through a development of spirituality within the individual concerned.

So, the spiritual training of the mind is needed not only for personal spiritual growth and development, but for handling other human beings in society in a masterly way. But the main purpose of the spiritual training of the mind is to give us the realization that we are essentially divine. Our true nature is the Atman. *Tat tvam asi, tat tvam asi*. You are that, you are that, that infinite Atman. This information must become an experience. It is only information. Vedas tell you, 'You are the Atman'—it is information. There is coal lying at the bottom of the land somewhere there; that is information. Then, I do a little bit of digging and I catch hold of the coal. That's called experience. Now I am rich with the wealth that was hidden. So also here the Divine that is hidden within us is just information. We work upon it. We train the mind to achieve it and finally this experience comes: 'I am free, I am free.' Maybe ages later it may come, but to be on the road is the most blessed experience. Once you know that the road is in the right direction, every step on that road leads to greater and greater joy and a sense of fulfilment.

When you climb Mount Everest the first ten thousand feet, you feel happy. The next ten thousand feet, you feel happier. Always you feel joy, though hardship is there, but there is joy. Finally, when you stand on the top of the world, what a wonderful achievement! 'I have achieved the greatest thing that man is capable of achieving.'

That was the expression that Buddha gave when he realized the Truth on a blessed full moon night 2,500 years ago. 'The Immortal has been gained by me. I am free! I am free!' This was the exclamation he gave at that time. And the joy that came is described in the Buddhist books. Immense joy, for days together he was walking up and down, full of joy. What a wonderful thing it is! Just like a child who gets a little lollipop to eat, it is immersed in joy—what a small source of joy it is. So also when we get some money. We make a million, for example; great joy. Or get some sense pleasure; great joy. True, they are all joy, but compared to this joy, these are all children with a little lollipop and nothing else. That is the testament of all the great spiritual teachers, that spiritual joy has no comparison. There is a verse that says: *Yach-cha kama-sukham loke yach-cha divyam mahat sukham; trishna kshaya-sukhasyaite narhat shodashim kalam*.<sup>8</sup> Whatever sense pleasures you have in this world, whatever higher pleasures you have in the heavens, this spiritual realization, joy, is so immense that none of these can be a fraction of that joy. That is a wonderful statement.

In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* it is said of the joy of a full human being: young, vital, plenty of money. There is the young man. Then, there are these higher beings like Gandharvas, Devas, gods, and others higher and higher. Now, all these joys cannot be equal to the joy of one young person who has realized the Atman. Infinite joy is the nature of that realization. That is the challenge thrown to the modern world by this great philosophy of man in depth. You are on the surface; you are swimming and you get shells. And you think this is all in the ocean. No. Dive deep. All the pearls are lying below; on the surface you get shells. Deep below you get pearls. Here is the greatest pearl, the most valuable pearl: your own infinite nature. Turn your attention a little in that direction, in the context

of your daily life, and work. That is the message of the Gita particularly.

You need not take to the spiritual training of the mind as a separate specialized project. In the course of life itself the spiritual training of the mind can go on, must go on, so that in this life you can become truly free. A sense of joy and fulfilment can come. Difficulties will be there, problems will be there, but this strength and joy that comes through spiritual training will make these things easy to handle. That is why to the householder, to the man of the world, the spiritual training of the mind is a tremendous strength, is a tremendous source of fulfilment. He will have a new source of strength to handle these things, apart from this intellectual strength that he already has. Spiritual strength is true strength, everything else is secondary. Here is the whole message of Vedanta and Yoga.

### **Of the Nature of Bliss**

Coming to us through every world religion—Christian mystical teaching, Islamic mystical teaching, Buddhistic, Hindu, Jewish—everywhere you will find that the central core of the spiritual message belongs to this category, that this human being must be installed in his own true glory, true dignity. Then he realizes his own divine dimension, which is hidden in every human being. And this human mind can be trained for that purpose. That is the nature of this training of the mind for spirituality. It is a palpable subject; spirituality is as palpable as physicality. Physicality, we all know; but spirituality is something impalpable, we think. It is palpable at that level. From the sensory point of view it is certainly impalpable, but from this point of view it is really palpable. That is why those who are in the path of spirituality don't regret that they are not having the other one. They have already had it, they have put their investment in

this line, they are going towards it. This kind of joyous pursuit of spirituality is what Vedanta recommends to every human being, a joyous pursuit. I have something, I want something higher, something better. This is fine, but it is not fine enough. There is something higher. That kind of attitude—a positive attitude, not a negative attitude. Not cursing and swearing at the world and going to become religious. No, that is absolutely negative. Here I have a fine life, but is there something better? Yes, there is something better. The heart is always asking that question. You should not stifle that question. What is that question? *Tatah kim? Tatah kim? Tatah kim?* What else? What more? What else? I have got something, what else? A child gets toys; beautiful, he enjoys them. Again, he asks: What else? There are books; he enjoys reading and studying, becomes a man of scholarship. Again, what else? Here is spirituality, every level you can see something higher, just like climbing a mountain. Every step that you climb, new vistas of beauty, joy, charm, everything comes to you. That is how spirituality is described in Vedantic literature—going higher and higher, seeing wider vistas of beauty, charm, fulfilment—that is how we invite human beings to undertake this mountain-climbing experiment of the spiritual training of the mind.

It is hard and yet it is joyous, and to the bright young people everything that is hard must be inviting. Easy life is not for young people. Hard life is welcome by all young people. This spiritual life is presented therefore, just like mountain climbing, inviting all to come and climb this mountain, this Mount Everest. Experience the infinite Atman, the Self of all. What joy! What delight will come! In the *Vivekachudamani* you would see that when the student realizes this truth, this joy is described there. What joy! Infinite rays of joy: 'I am full of that.' That language is used there. Tremendous sense of joy, that joy is my true nature, hidden all



the time. Let it open up; infinite joy will come to us. That is the language used in Vedanta. That should not be a joyless man going towards joy. No, from one joy to another joy. Physical joy is joy, sensory joy is joy, very valid. But there is something higher, something higher, something higher. Vedanta is so positive from that point of view. The child enjoying a toy or eating something, full of joy; beautiful. So also sensory satisfactions in the world we have, that is also beautiful; but go higher. There are refined joys, purer joys. Just like a pig enjoys a meal with the greatest gusto, but a human being can enjoy something else, not merely a good meal, he can enjoy a beautiful book. Ah! Beauty! What wonderful joy it is! And a higher joy—realizing God. The very pinnacle of joy. What is God? *Anandasvarupa*, of the nature of bliss, according to Vedanta. So, there is continuous growth in joy, growth in bliss from lower to higher, from finite to infinite. That is the march of man, not from darkness to light, but from light to light, from lesser light to better light.

This is how positively Vedanta presents human growth and development and fulfilment, and ends up with a little note of encouragement and blessing to every seeker saying, ‘March on, march on. Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.’ That is the language of the Upanishads: *utthisthata jagrata*. Don’t neglect this great adventure of climbing the Mount Everest of spiritual experience. Great things are in store for you. Don’t neglect it. That’s the language they use. Don’t neglect it. Other things you will have, but don’t neglect this. This is very very important for you. That is how this idea is put in the Upanishads: *utthisthata jagrata*. Awake to this plane of life. We are asleep on that plane now. I may be making money. I am asleep on this plane. Don’t sleep on this plane. Awake on this plane also. ‘Awake’ is the word used there: *utthisthata jagrata*. Then, continue to march on,

till you reach the end of your journey. That is the blessing Vedanta pronounces on all humanity who are in search of this great truth hidden within. Such a mind is a wonderful mind.


A pure mind is not a mind, it becomes the Atman itself. That is another wonderful idea that Sri Ramakrishna gives you. Pure mind, pure *buddhi*, pure Atman are one and the same. When the mind is truly pure, it is the Atman. That’s a wonderful idea. There is no such thing as separation here. But at our level these are all separate—our analyses, and so on. Pure mind, pure *buddhi*, and pure Atman are one and the same. That Infinite is in our nature. The little mind with which we work is all a very limited truncated edition, caught up in the body-mind complex. Release it from there, purify it; it realizes its own infinite form. That is the Atman. ‘I am that! I am that!’ This is the knowledge that will come at that stage of spiritual realization.

I see all over the world a desire to turn the mind in this direction. It is a wonderful adventure. It is only from that point of view that we should enter into this; a tremendous adventure like climbing Mount Everest or seeking the North Pole. And it is a slow process. There is nothing very quick in that, and it is full of difficulties as well. But adventure is always full of difficulties, and we are willing to face that adventure and its difficulties. That should be the attitude. You should not enter into spiritual life

**O**ne should be consistent in thought and words. It won’t do to let the lips utter something which the mind does not approve. What the mind thinks, the lips too should express, and vice versa. What has once come out of the lips must be carried out at all cost. One who acts thus finds everything getting favourable to him.

—Swami Turiyananda, *Spiritual Talks*, 180

in a sauntering attitude, in a sense of cheap mind. There always must be strength, steadiness and intense desire to achieve the result of this great journey. That is how the Upanishads describe man's spiritual growth, development, fulfilment, which is the birthright of every human being. Every human being will realize it one day or the other, but those who are earnest want to do it now. Why tomorrow; why not now? That's the language of a mind that is earnest and sincere.

Such is the exhortation of the Upanishads, which are described by Shankaracharya as more compassionate towards man than a thousand mothers put together. The mother is very compassionate to the child. The child is sleeping; the mother wakes him up. Why? You have to go to school for your own welfare. This kind of motherly love you see in the world, and these Upanishads are a thousand times more compassionate than a mother can be, because they tell you: 'Here is a profound truth about you. Turn in that direction, realize that Truth, achieve fulfilment here and now. And I bless you, says the Upanishad: *Svasti vah paraya tamasah parastat*.<sup>2</sup> The teacher in the *Mundaka Upanishad* says, 'May good betide you. May you cross this ocean of darkness, illusion, ignorance and achieve illumination. I bless you! I bless you!' That is the language in the *Mundaka Upanishad*: *Svasti vah paraya tamasah parastat*. May you cross the ocean of darkness and illusion and achieve this fulfilment here and now. This is the wonderful note of hope and blessing you find in the Upanishads, and I cannot end this talk on the subject of spiritual training of the mind better than by passing on this blessing pronounced by the sages of the Upanishads on all humanity: *Svasti vah paraya tamasah parastat*. 

## References

8. Mahabharata, 12.168.36.
9. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 2.2.6.

(Continued from page 359)

## Notes and References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997).
2. For details see *Complete Works*, 1.470-1; 2.78, 182, 196, 254-5, 328-9, 422; 8.6.
3. For a fuller discussion of this idea see Swami Vireswarananda, *Spiritual Ideal for the Present Age* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1983), 2-3.
4. Cf. Swami Ranganathananda, *Eternal Values for a Changing Society*, 4 vols (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1993), 4.1-71.
5. *Complete Works*, 1.422.
6. See Francisco H G Ferreira and Michael Walton, 'Equity and well-being' in *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development* (Washington DC: The World Bank; New York: Oxford University, 2005).
7. See Amartya Sen, *Inequality Re-examined* (New Delhi: Oxford University, 1992).
8. For some discussion on the similarity between Sen's and Swami Vivekananda's ideas on human development see Swami Bhajananda, 'Relevance of Vivekananda's Economic Ideas in the New Millennium', *Artha Beekshan*, 11/2 (September 2002), 1-51.
9. See the annual human development reports from 1990 to 2008 issued by the United Nations Development Program.
10. P Dasgupta, *Human Well-being and Natural Environment* (New Delhi: Oxford University, 2001).
11. *Human Well-being and Natural Environment*, chapters 6-9; and Kirk Hamilton, *Where Is the Wealth of Nations?* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2006).
12. The technical details can be found in S K Chatterjee, *Human Development and its Quantification: A Holistic Approach* (Kolkata: Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, 2009) and S K Chatterjee, 'Quantification of Human Development', *Sankhya*, 70 (Series B)/2 (2008).

# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



***Celebrating Shri Ramakrishna:  
Essays for the 175th  
Birth Anniversary of  
Shri Ramakrishna***  
Swami Tathagatananda

Vedanta Society of New York, 34 West  
71st Street, New York, NY 10023. Web-  
site: [www.vedantany.org](http://www.vedantany.org). 2011. 260 pp.  
₹ 75.

In the seventh chapter of *Celebrating Shri Ramakrishna* Swami Tathagatananda writes: ‘The Avatara comes to inundate the world with a flood of divine compassion which brings life-transforming spiritual vibrations to the entire universe.’ He then says: ‘Shri Ramakrishna, the Avatara of the modern age, is the Incarnation of love.’

Throughout this book we find these two statements corroborated example after example. Ramakrishna’s life encompassed and embraced the whole world. He never rejected the faith of anyone who came to him—even that of an agnostic—provided that person was sincere and earnest. Moreover, as the author shows us, in the realm of spiritual ideas Ramakrishna’s life and teachings have had astonishing influence on movements around the world. Again, no one, no matter how poor or low in social status, was rejected by him. His grace was bestowed on brahmanas and untouchables alike, on the rich and the poor, on men and women, on people of all faiths—and even on those without one. Even animals felt his touch of compassion.

Though Ramakrishna was self-fulfilled in all ways, there were two aspects of himself that he could manifest and reveal more easily and perfectly through other bodies. Through Sarada Devi he revealed the universal mother aspect of God. And through Swami Vivekananda he revealed the universal aspect of religion.

It was not that Ramakrishna did not fully embody these aspects himself. On the contrary, he was the power and inspiration behind Sarada Devi’s motherhood as also Swami Vivekananda’s universalism. In fact, Swami Tathagatananda calls Sarada Devi ‘the consummation of Shri Ramakrishna’s ideal. ... Her life was the continuation and increased unfolding of the Master’s message.’ And regarding Swamiji the author says: ‘He realized Truth behind manifoldness and thereby inherited the rich tradition of Hinduism that was re-authenticated by his Master, Shri Ramakrishna. Thanks to his training and realization, he was able to articulate the broad-minded acceptance of all paths as valid in the search for the One behind the many and the One in the many—the Transcendent and the Immanent.’ Thus, in celebrating Ramakrishna, Swami Tathagatananda has also celebrated the Master’s ideal embodied in Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

There is no end, however, to Ramakrishna’s facets. We also find the Ramakrishna ideal manifest in those whose lives radiate with nobility of character and self-sacrifice. For this reason the author has included chapters on Bhishma, a great hero of the Mahabharata, and on César Chavez, a poor farm worker in the US who was influenced by Gandhi and who became ‘a symbol of hope and success for downtrodden workers throughout the world.’

Besides all this, readers will be delighted to find new details given on Swamiji’s relationship with his mother, Bhuvaneshwari Devi, as also on the lives of two of Ramakrishna’s biographers: Dhan Gopal Mukherji and Romain Rolland.

In this book the author has shown how Ramakrishna, by awakening the spirit of religion itself, has verified that the ancient, eternal truths of religion continue to have great relevance in this modern age all over the world. Swami Tathagatananda is especially equipped to present these ideas, as his



deep interest in and appreciation of both Western and Eastern philosophy and psychology are well known from his previous books.

The present volume also celebrates how the Ramakrishna ideal is made alive and practical in any life lived with a noble purpose. In this review we could only give a small glimpse of the contents, but we know that the spiritually hungry will find a feast from beginning to end in the book. We are grateful to the author, who is the Head of the Vedanta Society of New York, for the beautiful manner in which he has presented the Ramakrishna ideal and also for giving us fresh inspiration to strive for its attainment.

*Pravrajika Shuddhatmaprana*  
Vivekananda Retreat, Ridgely



**Practical Wisdom**  
Svami Purna

New Age Books, A-44, Naraina Phase I, New Delhi 110 028. Website: [www.newagebooksindia.com](http://www.newagebooksindia.com). 2010. x + 156 pp. ₹ 195.

A selection of discourses by Svami Purna, this book comes like fresh air in a literary market flooded with jargons and clichés aimed at impressing readers, without necessarily enlightening them.

Svami Purna is one name in the long list of teachers who have succeeded in presenting, in an accessible way, the abstract concepts of Hinduism to the Western audience. His firm grounding in Indian philosophy, coupled with his understanding of the present-day lifestyle, has helped him in teaching people how to lead a fuller life in this modern world. The approach to the topics is rational, practical, and rooted in the solid foundations of Indian spiritual traditions.

‘Real faith does not live in words alone. It lives in actions, the actions of everyday life,’ says Svami Purna, and he shows how to do this in thirty-six delightfully short chapters that cover the entire gamut of human life. In a simple and lucid language the author explains how to spiritualize all our actions and thoughts. Wisely he exhorts his readers to strive for emotional integration before embarking on the spiritual journey. His expos-

ition of *pranayama* and its benefits is noteworthy for its clarity, depth, and coverage. He takes up commonplace topics like celebration of birthdays or tourist trips and gives them a spiritual twist. He presents hands-on instructions on several practical issues like how to handle criticism, fear, insecurity, and so forth. The book abounds in memorable one-liners like this: ‘Accept life as it is—do not judge, perceive, or expect—and just enjoy life and let it flow.’

Practical tips at the end of a few chapters are extremely useful—though they could have been added to all the chapters. Refreshing and lively, the book makes a pleasant reading.

*Swami Vedapurushananda*  
Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia

## BOOKS RECEIVED



**Primer of Vedanta**  
Swami Tyagisananda

Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. Website: [www.chennai.math.org](http://www.chennai.math.org). 2010. v + 82 pp. ₹ 20.

Vedanta is not a speculative philosophy but a direct path to Truth. This booklet concisely explains the essentials of Vedanta.



**Ramakrishna's Naren and Naren's Ramakrishna**  
Swami Budhananda

Ramakrishna Math. 2011. vi + 74 pp. ₹ 20.

This book describes the magnificent guru-disciple relationship that changed the religious, philosophical, and spiritual world.



**Value Oriented Moral Lessons, Number 4**  
Swami Raghaveshananda

Ramakrishna Math. 2009. 62 pp. ₹ 20.

A highly educative booklet for children.

# REPORTS



*Inauguration of the Knowledge Park at Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala, Mysore*



## **New Centre**

A branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math has been started at the birthplace of Swami Trigunatitananda at Naora, South 24-Parganas, with the land, buildings, and other assets received from the Sri Sri Ramakrishna Trigunatita Sevashrama, Naora. The handing over ceremony was held on 7 February 2011, the birthday of Swami Trigunatitananda. The benedictory address of Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, was read out and Swami Prabhananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, addressed the gathering. A large number of monks and devotees attended the function. The address of this new centre is: Ramakrishna Math, Village Naora, PO Bodra, Dist. South 24-Parganas, West Bengal 743 502; telephone: 9143730403 and 9830527243.

## **Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda**

**Ramakrishna Math (Yogodyan), Kankur-gachhi,** and **Ramakrishna Math, Viveknagar,** held devotees' conferences in January.

**Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi,** organized a public meeting on 9 February; a two-day seminar—inaugurated by Sri Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Human Resource Development—for principals, senior professors, and educational administrators on 12 and 13 February; and a seminar on the theme 'Swami Vivekananda's Vision of Unity of the East and the West', inaugurated

by Sri T N Chaturvedi, former governor of Karnataka, on 14 February.

**Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri,** conducted a youth convention on 16 January and a devotees' conference on 27 February.

The first state-level seminar in commemoration of the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was held by **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Asansol,** on 26 and 27 February. Sri Shankar Roy Chowdhury, former chief of the Army Staff, inaugurated the seminar, which was held on the theme 'Religious Harmony'. Swami Prabhananda delivered the keynote address.

On 20 February **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Vishakhapatnam,** organized an essay competition on 'Swami Vivekananda's Ideas on Education', in which 147 students participated. Besides, the centre held a youth retreat on 27 February, in which 128 delegates took part.

**Ramakrishna Math, Vadodara,** held a state-level written quiz competition on 'The Life of Swami Vivekananda', in which 34,267 students of 733 schools participated. In a function held on 28 February Dr Kamla Beniwal, governor of Gujarat, distributed prizes to the winners.

## **News from Branch Centres**

Prof C N R Rao, Chairman, Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, inaugurated the Knowledge Park at the **Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala, Mysore,** on 6 January. The park is intended to informally provide necessary stimuli to aspiring and budding youngsters to de-

velop love for knowledge and discover the secrets of nature through working models, charts, and other features pertaining to different aspects of science, technology, spirituality, fine arts, culture, and higher values in general.

From 11 to 17 January, on the occasion of the Gangasagar Mela, **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Manasadwip**, organized a camp at the Mela area in which free board and lodging was provided to 1,600 pilgrims and free meals were served to about 1,000 non-resident pilgrims. Discourses and devotional songs were also arranged in the camp.

On 26 January, Swami Vivekananda's birthday, the first floor of the monks' quarters building at **Ramakrishna Math, Ootacamund**, was inaugurated, and the book *A Journey of Eight and a Half Decades (1926–2010): A Brief History of Ramakrishna Math, Ootacamund* was released.

**Ramakrishna Math, Mangalore**, launched Jnana Vahini, a mobile bookstall, on 26 January.

The National Youth Day (12 January) was celebrated with processions, cultural competitions, speeches, music, yogasana demonstration, and other events by centres at **Baghbazar, Kozhikode, Ghatshila, Jamshedpur**, and **Sarisha**.

**Ramakrishna Math and Mission Sevashrama, Allahabad**, organized, on the occasion of the Magh Mela, a medical camp, discourses, and an exhibition depicting the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda at Triveni Sangam from 19 January to 18 February. In all, 14,903 patients were treated at the medical camp and nearly 85,000 people witnessed the exhibition.

The eye operation theatre at the dispensary building of **Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Garbeta**, was inaugurated on 28 January.

During the months of January and February **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi**, organized nine regional Kisan Melas, farmers' fairs,

in three districts of Jharkhand and on 4 and 5 February a central Kisan Mela at the Ashrama's farm in Getalsud. About 4,500 farmers took part in each regional mela and 10,000 farmers participated in the central mela.

## Relief

**Disturbance Relief** • From 31 January to 2 February **Cherrapunjee** centre distributed the following items to 891 families in the Assam-Meghalaya border areas—Mendipather, East Garo Hills district, Meghalaya, and Dudhnoi-Krishnai, Goalpara district, Assam—affected by recent social disturbance: 8,300 kg rice, 3,260 kg dal, 112 cartons of biscuits, 1,400 blankets, 2,010 garments, and 700 utensil sets (each set containing 1 plate, 1 bowl, 1 tumbler, 1 ladle, 1 cooking pot, and 1 jug).

**Distress Relief** • The following centres distributed various items to needy people: **Belgharia**: 1,293 saris, 1,143 dhotis, 67 lungis, 1,140 shirts, 1,140 pants, 1,653 children's garments, and other items; **Ichapur**: 500 saris; **Jamshedpur**: 4,000 kg rice, 800 kg dal, and 400 kg vegetable oil; **Medinipur**: 140 saris, 60 dhotis, and 10 lungis.

**Winter Relief** • 14,037 blankets were distributed to needy people through the following centres: **Aalo**, 1,000; **Almora**, 250; **Baranagar Math**, 250; **Baranagar Mission**, 450; **Barasat**, 250; **Belgaum**, 200; **Belgharia**, 942; **Coimbatore Mission**, 50; **Contai**, 250; **Gaurhati**, 400; **Gol Park**, 300; **Ichapur**, 1,500; **Jaipur**, 250; **Jalpaiguri**, 200; **Jamtara**, 600; **Kamarpukur**, 1,000; **Kankurgachhi**, 250; **Kanpur**, 250; **Lucknow**, 1,000; **Medinipur**, 445; **Patna**, 1,050; **Puri Math**, 700; **Puri Mission**, 1,000; **Raipur**, 600; **Saradapitha**, 550; **Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House**, 1,500. Besides, the following centres distributed winter garments to the needy: **Almora**, 10 sets of coats and pants; **Belgharia**, 103 winter garments; **Patna**, 500 jackets.

**Flood Rehabilitation** • **Belgaum** centre continued the construction of 213 houses for the victims of the October 2009 flood at Gokak and Sindhanur taluks in Belgaum and Raichur districts respectively. Till February the centre had erected 11 houses up to the plinth level, 1 to the lintel level, and 201 to the roof level. 